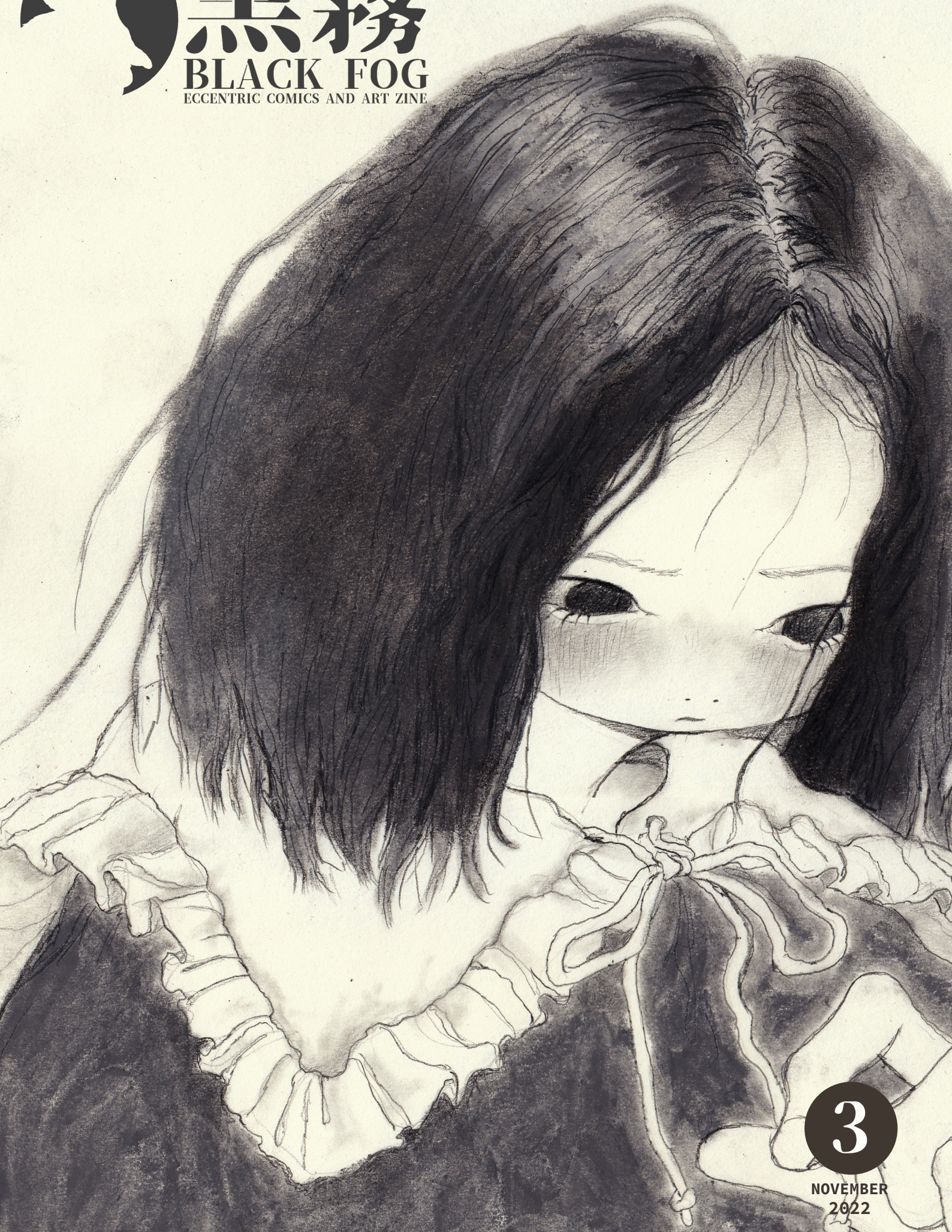




黒霧

BLACK FOG
ECCENTRIC COMICS AND ART ZINE



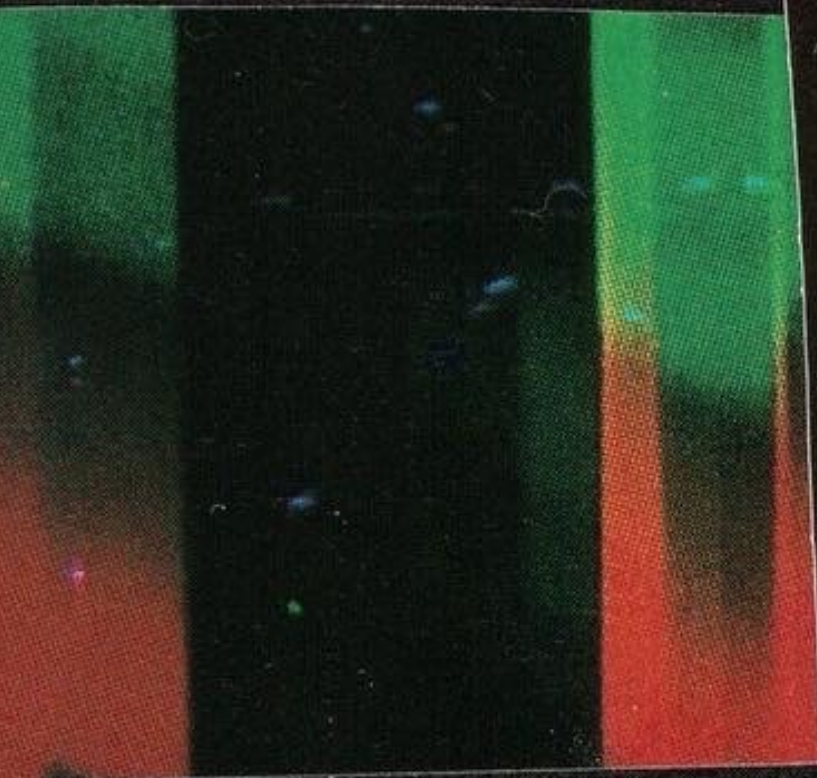
3

NOVEMBER
2022

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V2 LC 0 hz	2 V2 HC 12
V3 LC 0 hz	3 V3 HC 15
V4 LC 0 hz	4 V4 HC 15
V5 LC 0 hz	5 V5 HC 15
V6 LC 0 hz	6 V6 HC 15

le Write Librarian







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mtk

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Frederick St. Peter, [Kallisto](#), Kasse, Masha, mtk, Nickk
Dropkick, Olaf Modzelewski Mułyk/7882, os, rrp8, skrong,
Traci Hannon

Design & layout:

mtk

Cover/rear:

Masha/Dunkleshreken

Special thanks:

大雨, efe, Kasse, [MrDetonia](#), Thon,
Quake community, [Font End Dev](#)

Released for free. All the arts, comics, photographs, written stories and poems in the black fog zine are **reserved copyright** to their respective creators.

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If you wish to know more, [visit us](#).

Wanna talk? [Discord](#).

Editor's note

11th November 2022

It's here.
We've done it.

I know You've been waiting eons, but the battle is over... or is it.

*What you read right now is a mere copy, and the original Zine has been stolen by **The Holder of the Zine**, a demonic abomination from **Arcane Dimension**. They've told me only You can retrieve it, so uh... head to **page 8** to do just that :)*

For the rest of You, I hope You enjoy this issue, it's been a long time of hard work, procrastination, even more procrastination, and some more hard work on top. Be sure to check up on Your favourite artists, and thank them for their contribution.

There is a lot of great stuff in this issue, lots of **poems and photography**, and even some music links if You've got ears.

Be sure to check the whole **City of the Sun** series by **Striggy**, as what's in the zine is just a snippet of the whole story!

I'm also very happy to have **Masha's** work on the cover, her art style is super unique, and apparently she even does commissions, so check out her twitter.

To answer the burning question, **zine #4** might happen, but not all types of content will remain. Keep an eye out on our **discord** channel for official confirmation.

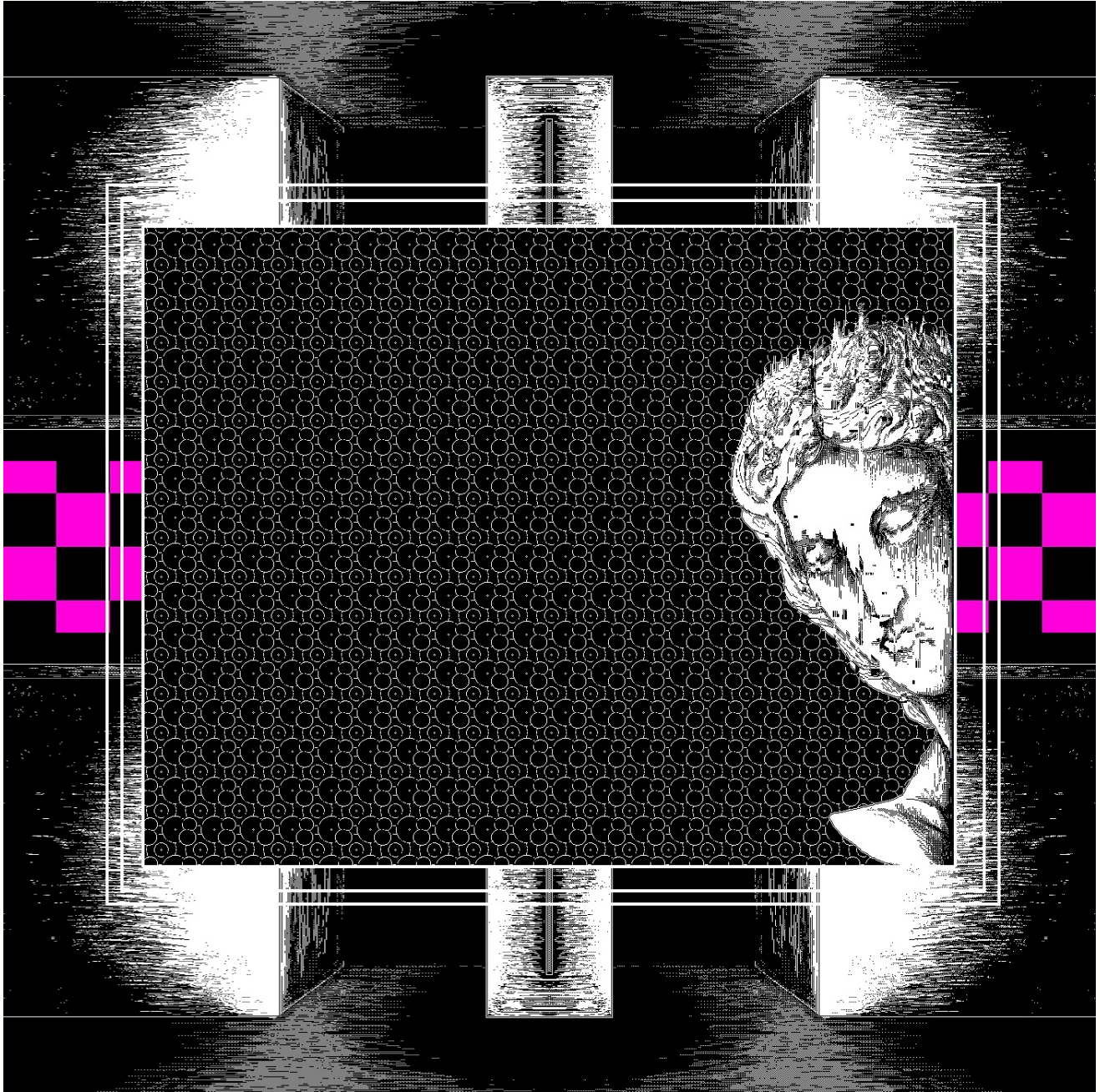
If You've never been to our discord channel, it's chill and quite slow, but there's enough space to share your work, share the work of others, illustrations, photos, music etc. Come and say hi!

Please enjoy these 138 pages of chaos and tranquility, enjoy the Quake map, and thank You for Your patience.

- mtk



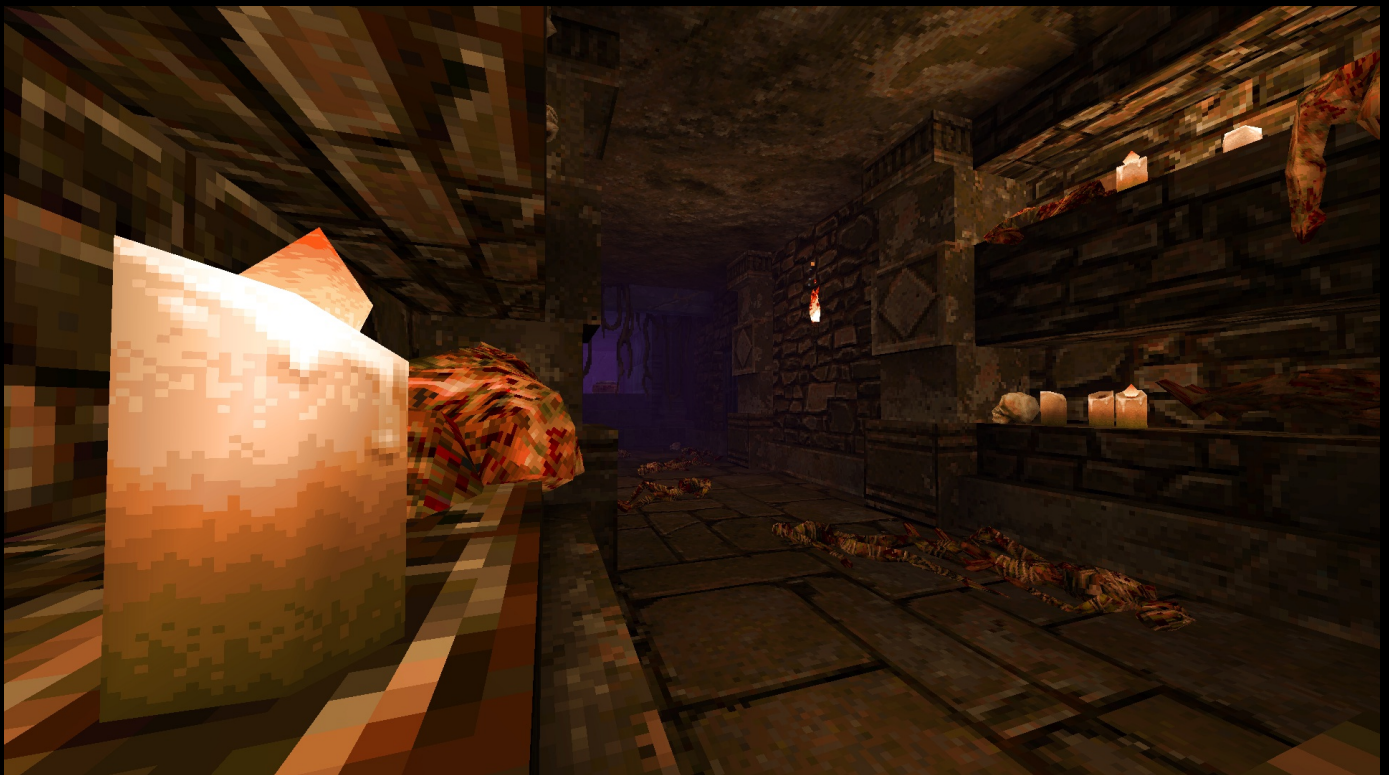
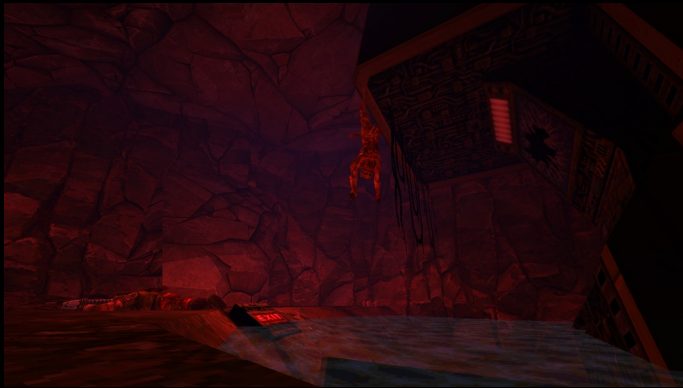
Author: Brian Judge

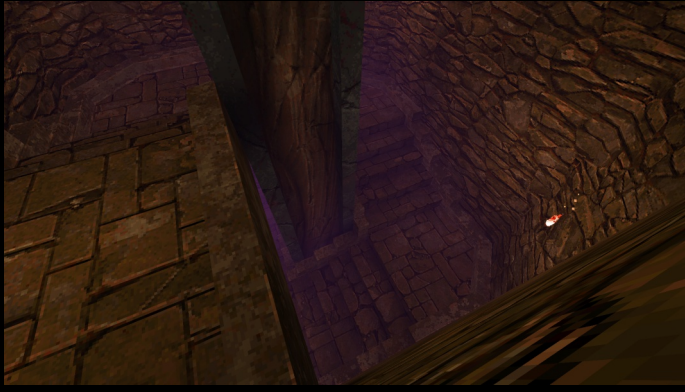


Author: Dunkelshreken



Special little treat for the readers, **The Black Fog**, Quake 1 Single Player Map!
 The quest? To find the Black Fog zine #3 of course, kept hidden for centuries by **The Holder of the Zine!**





⇌ THE HOLDER OF THE ZINE'S ABOUT TO MAKE YOU HIS BITCH.

태양소년 CITY OF THE SUN

CHAPTER 6



READS LEFT TO RIGHT

YOU
KNOW
WHAT, THAT'S
COOL! I'LL
JUST LET
MYSELF--

OUT?!

kak
kak

WELL
RILIND,
THIS IS
OUR
STOP.

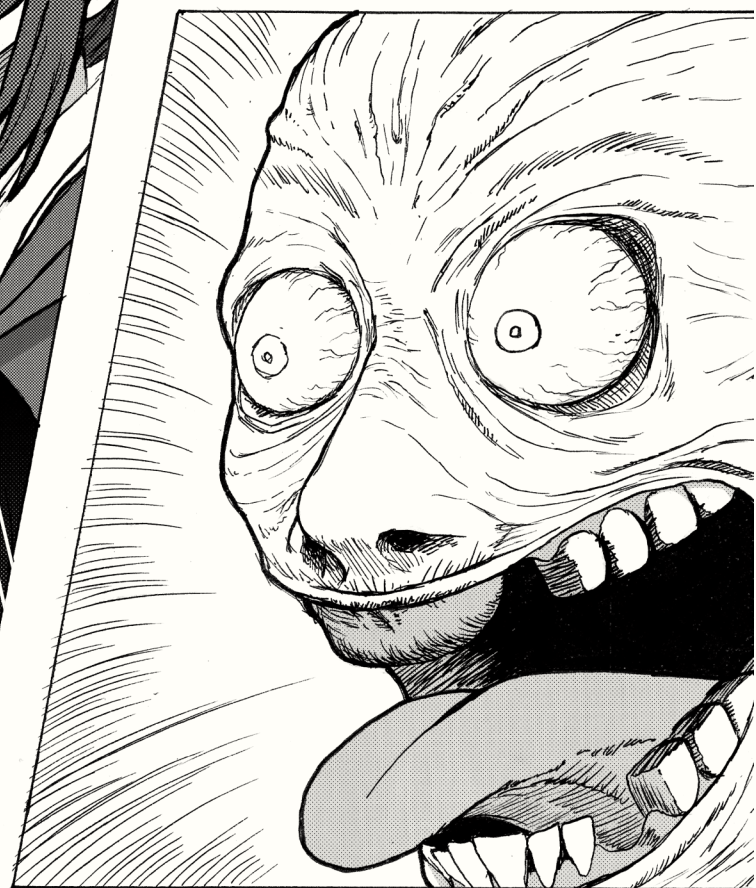
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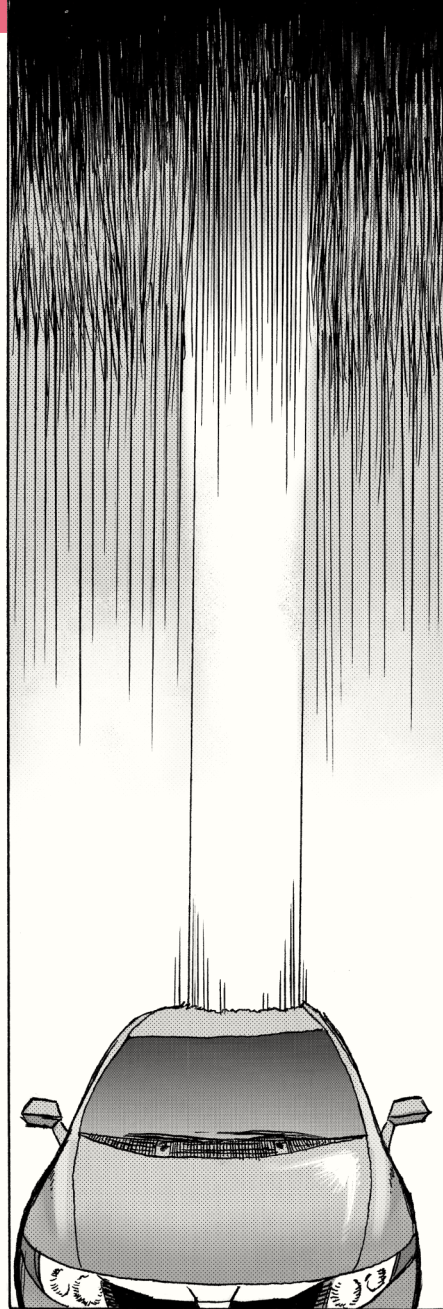
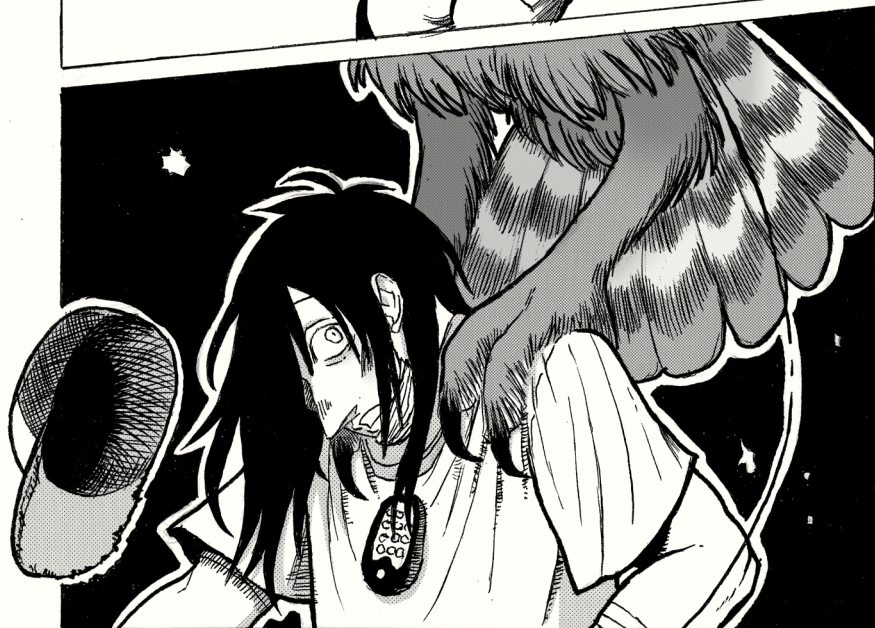
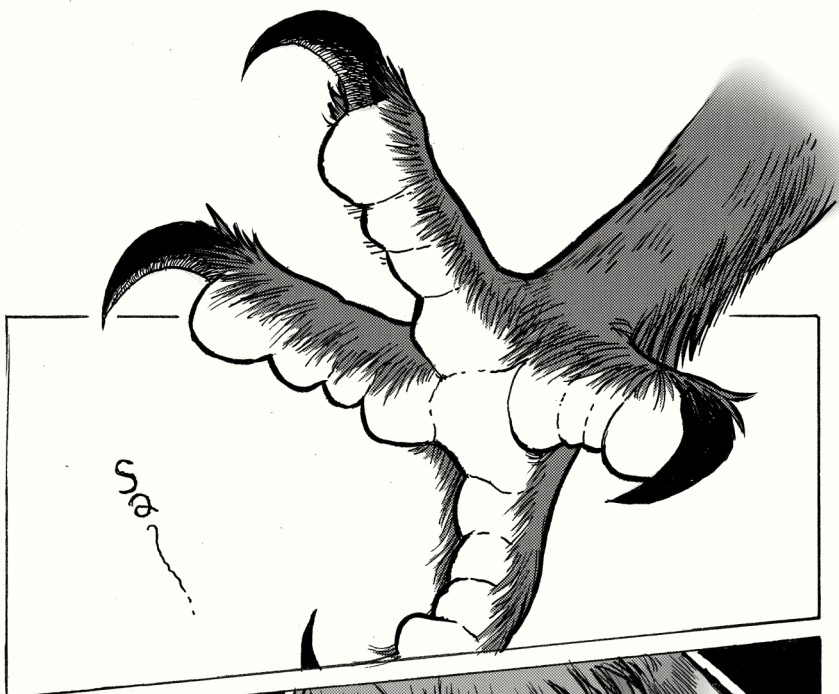
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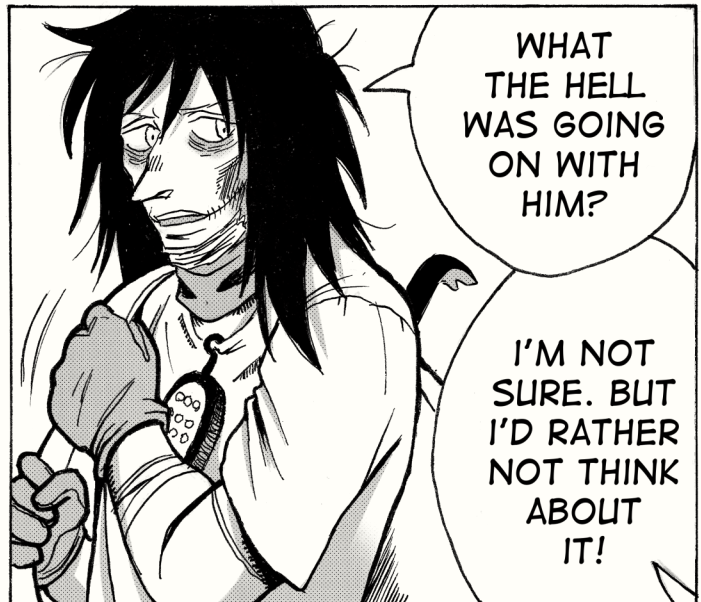
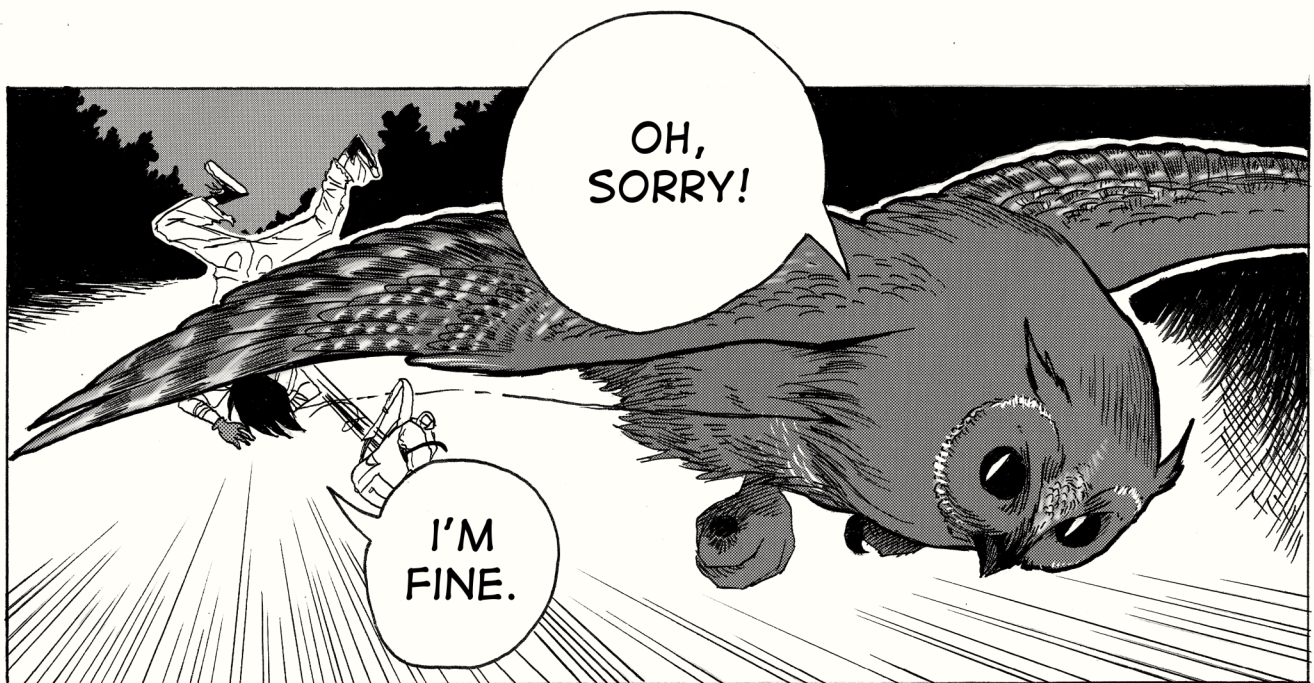
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ZA
ZA

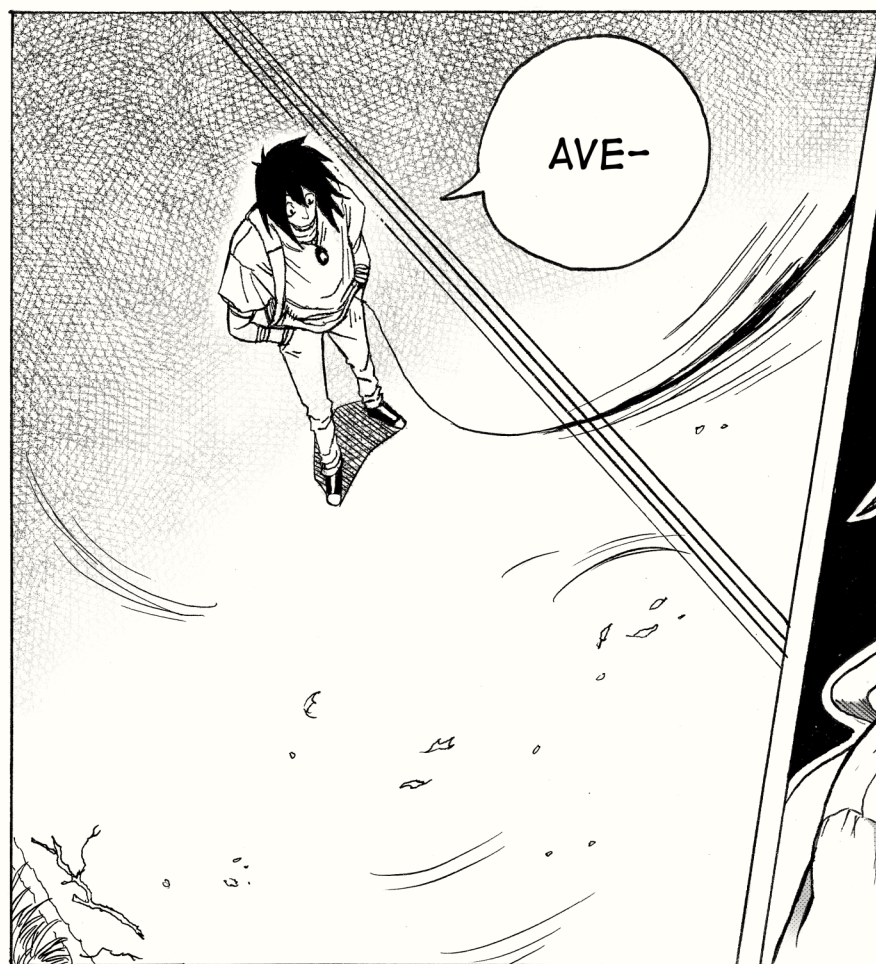
TOO
BAD WE'LL
BE WALKING
THE REST
OF THE
WAY!

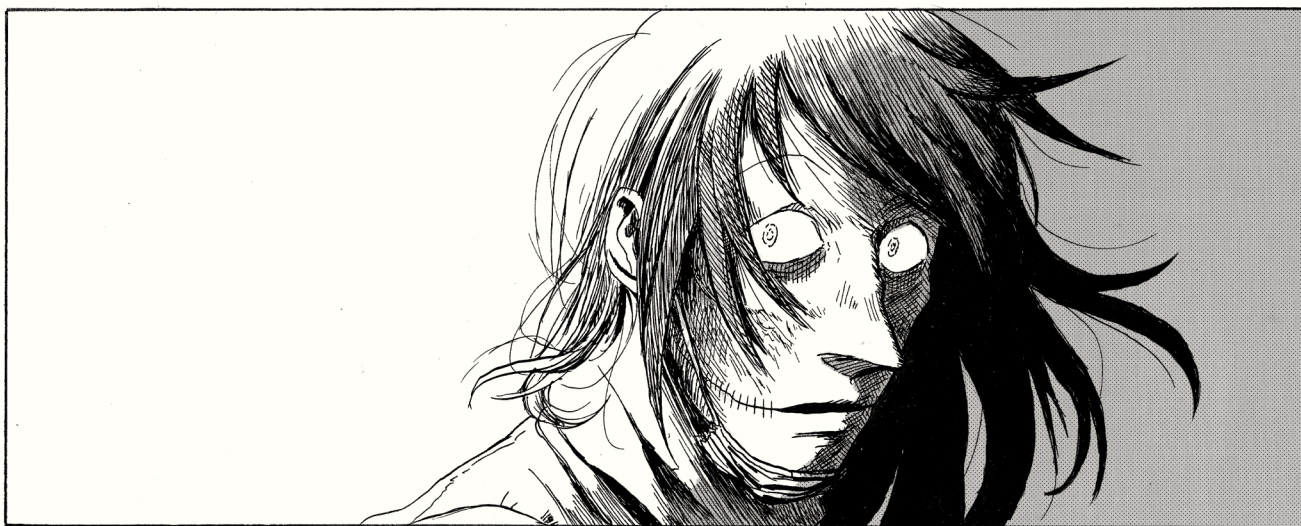
?!

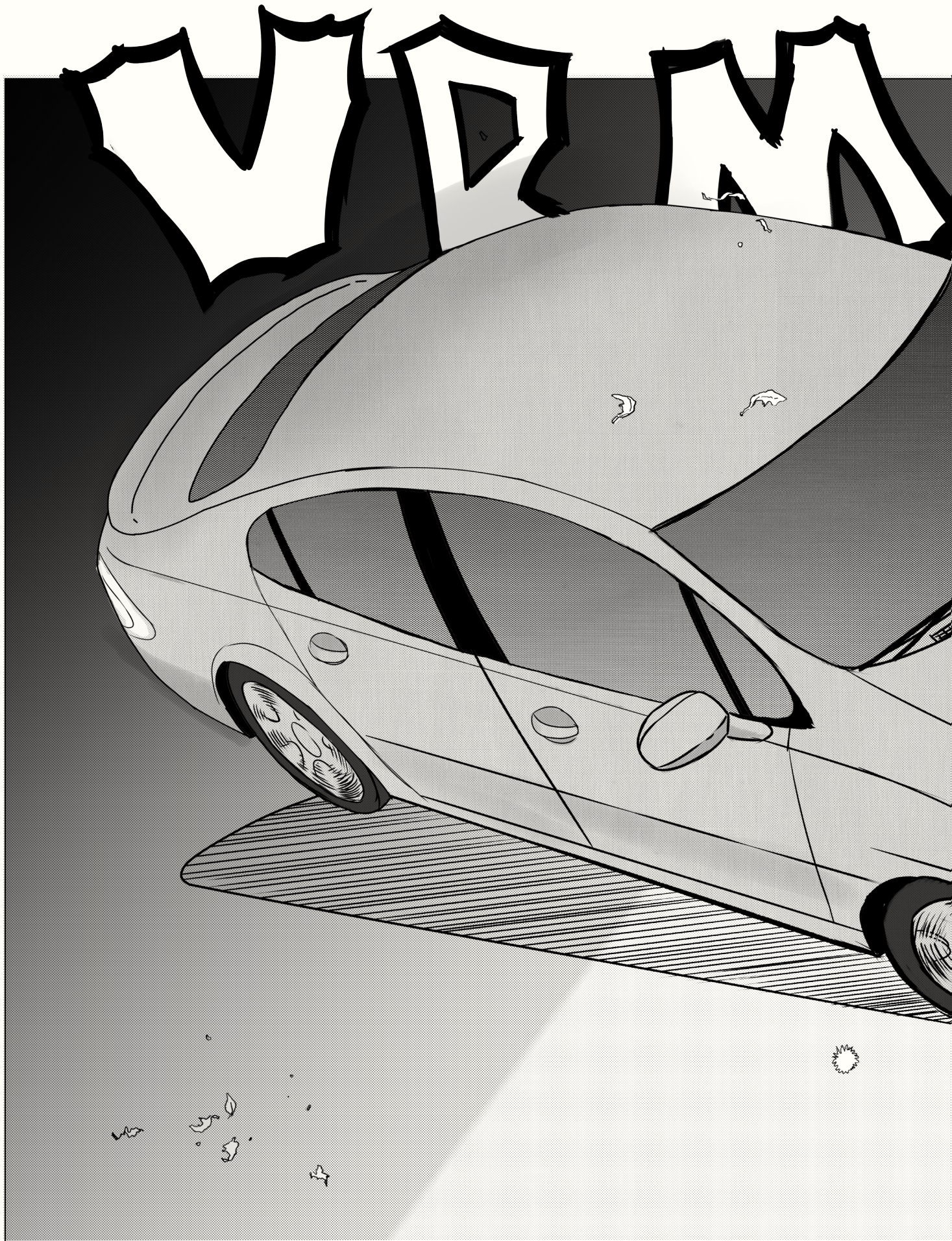


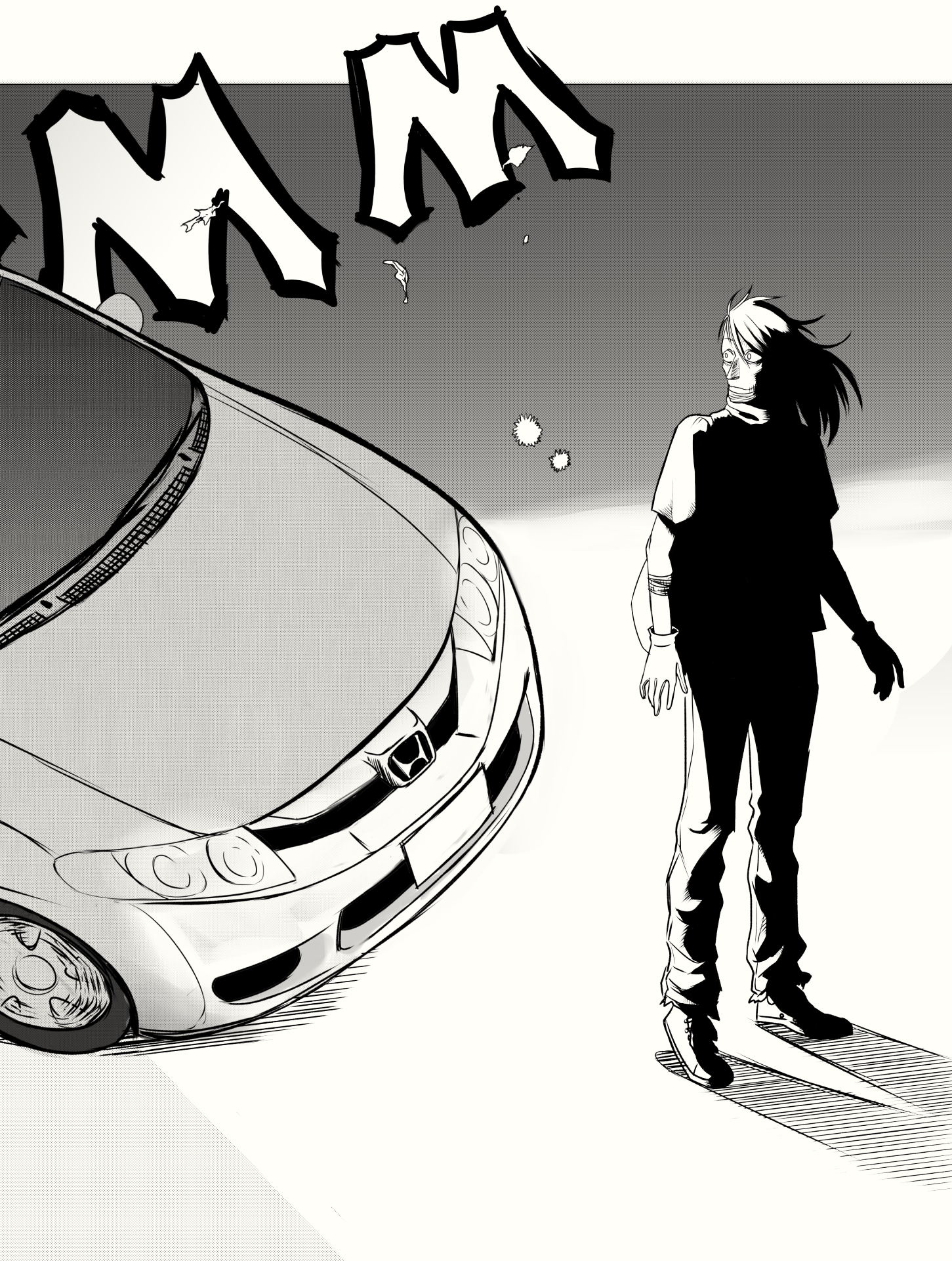


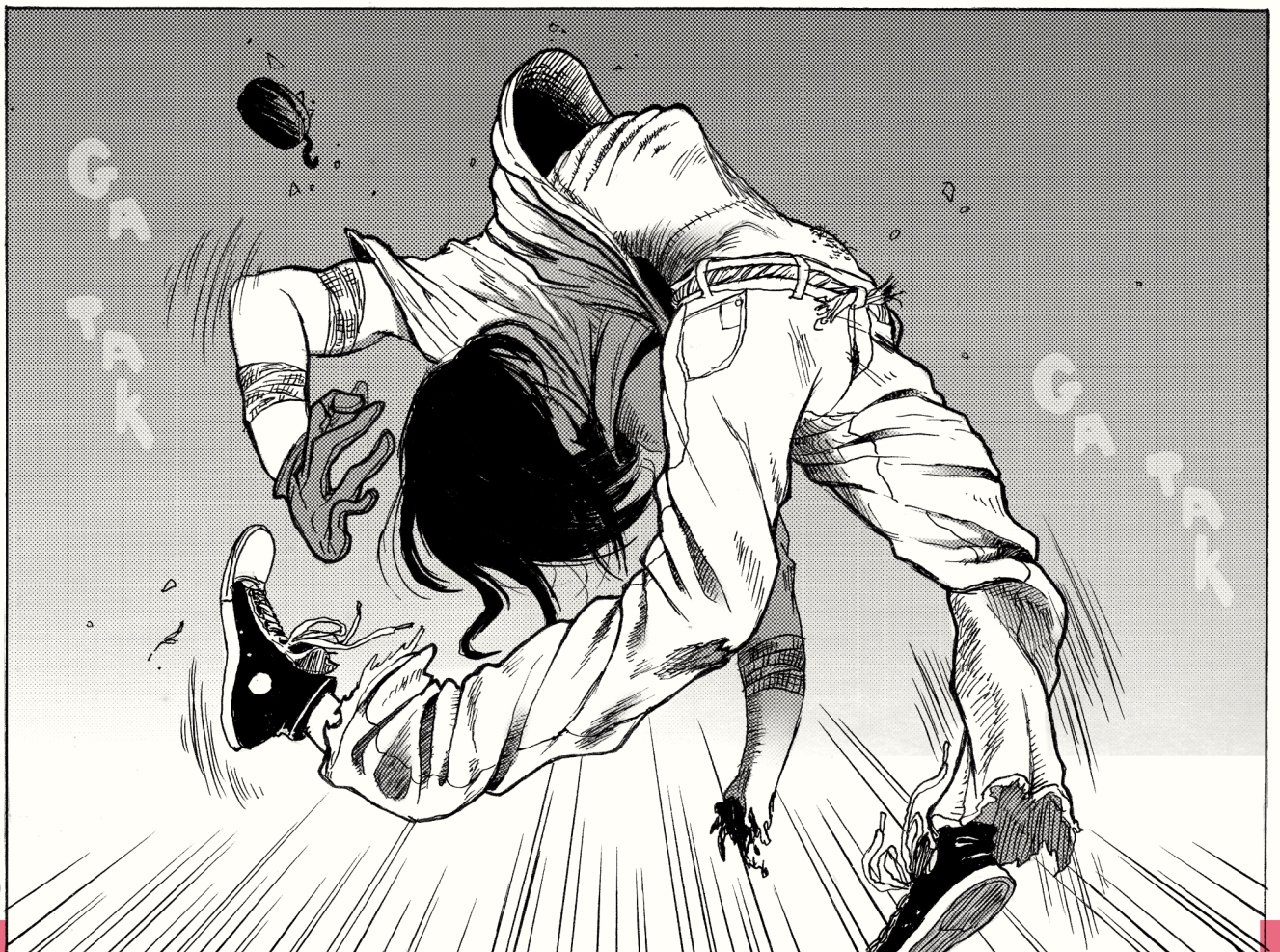
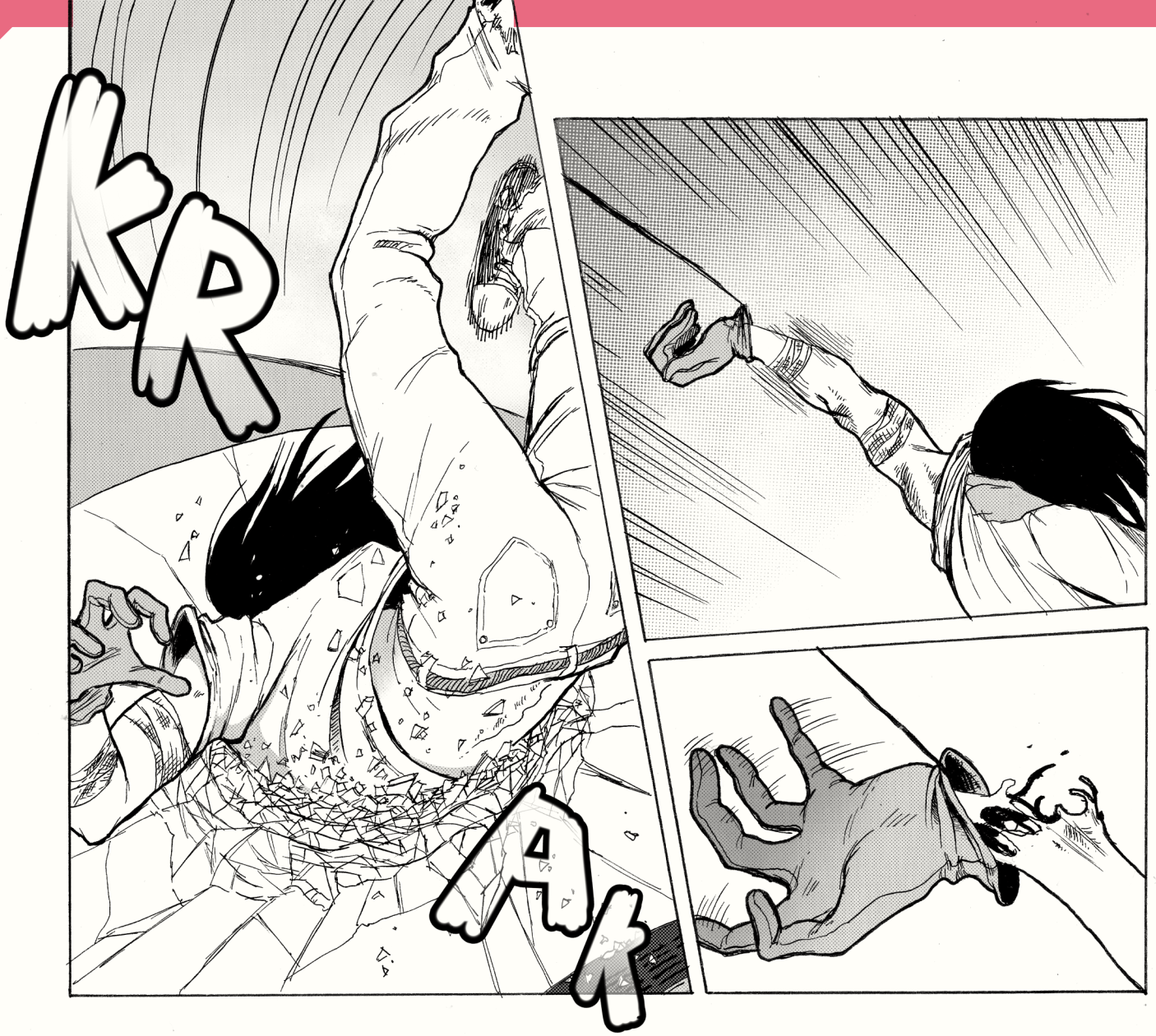


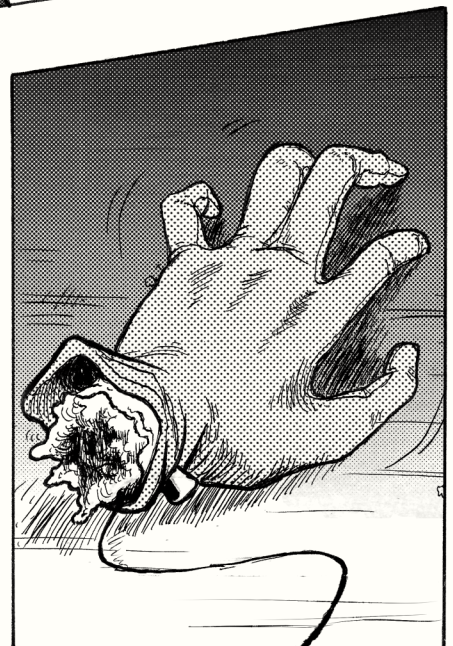
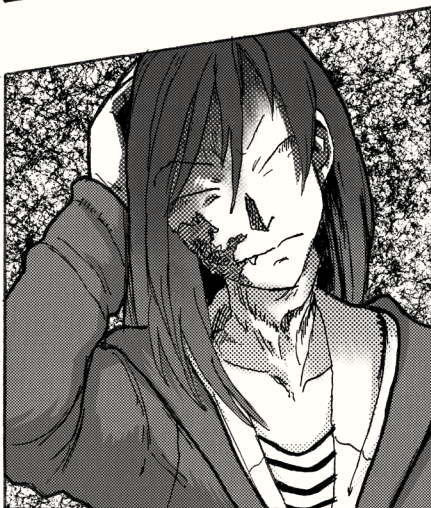
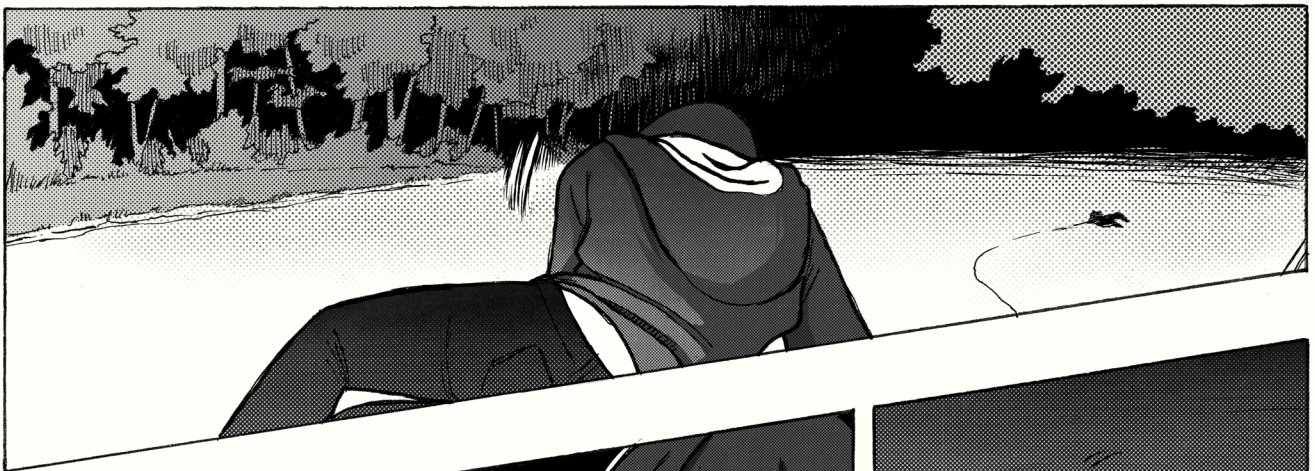
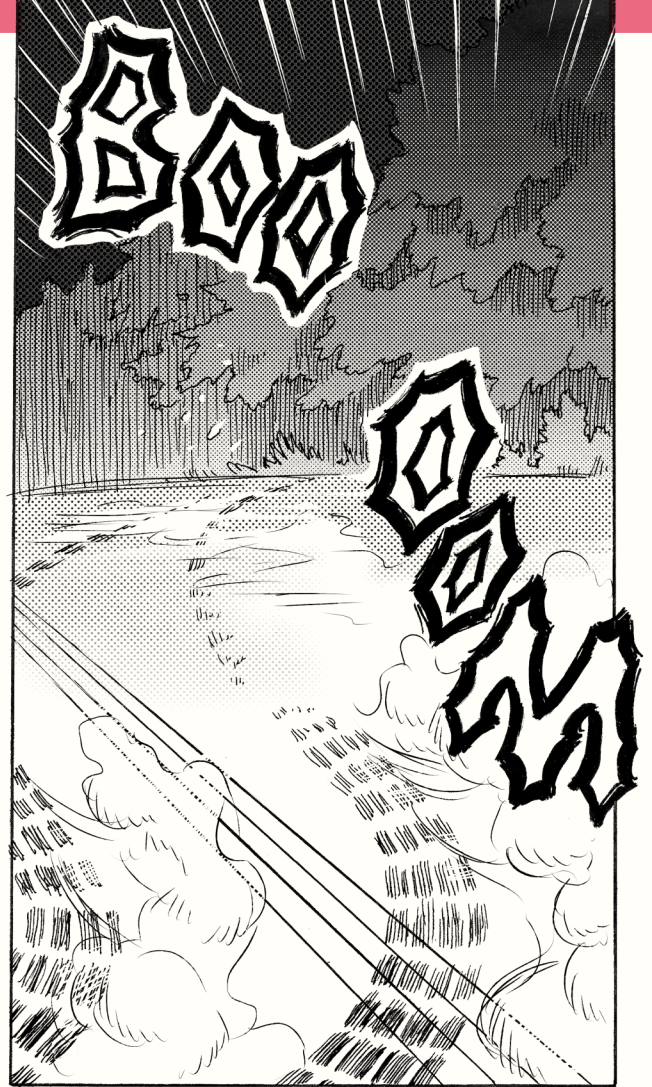


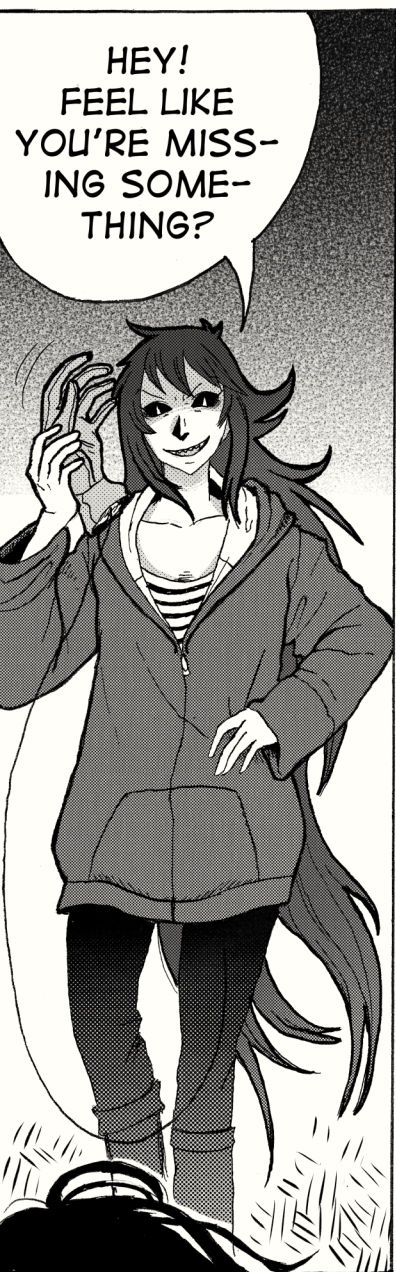


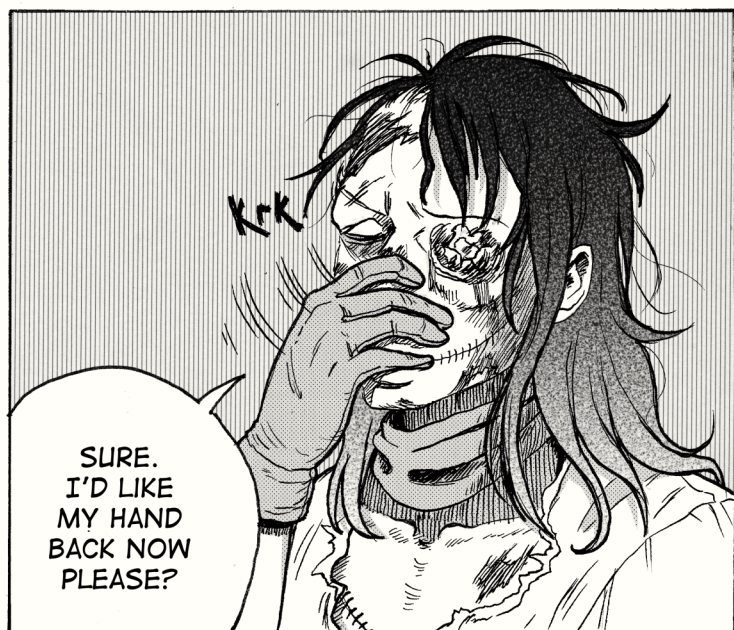


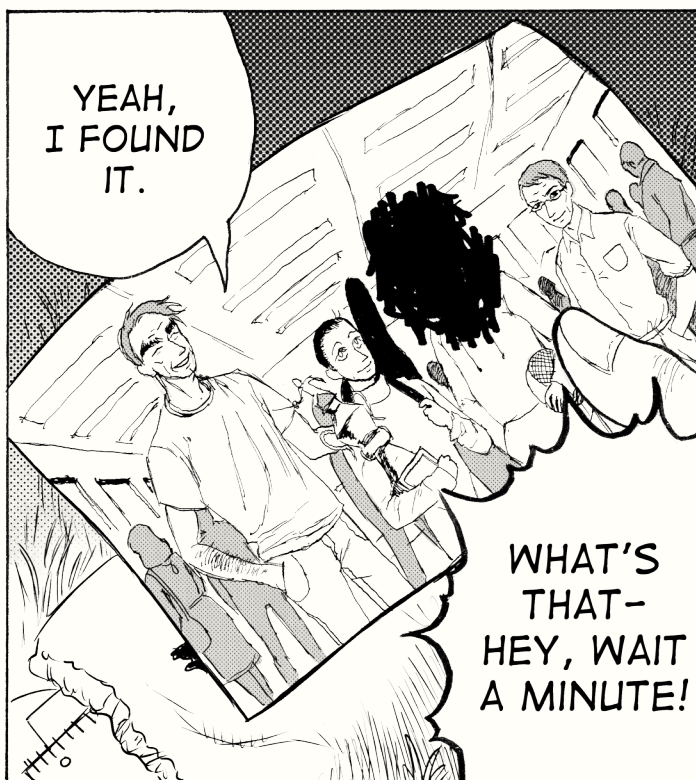
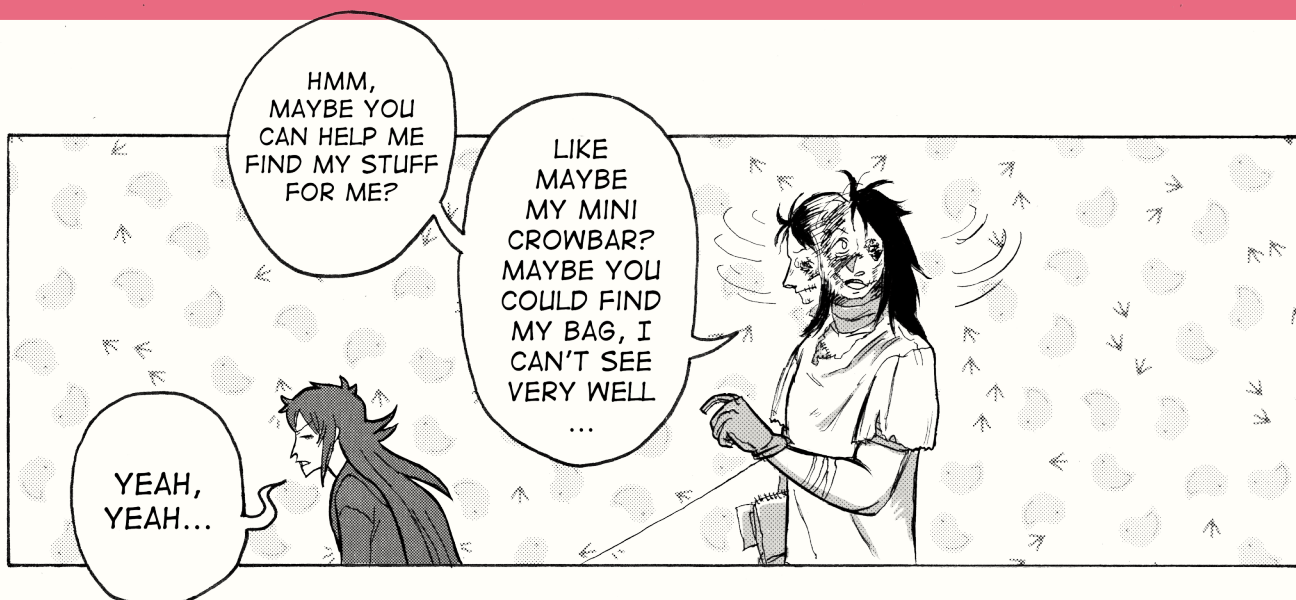


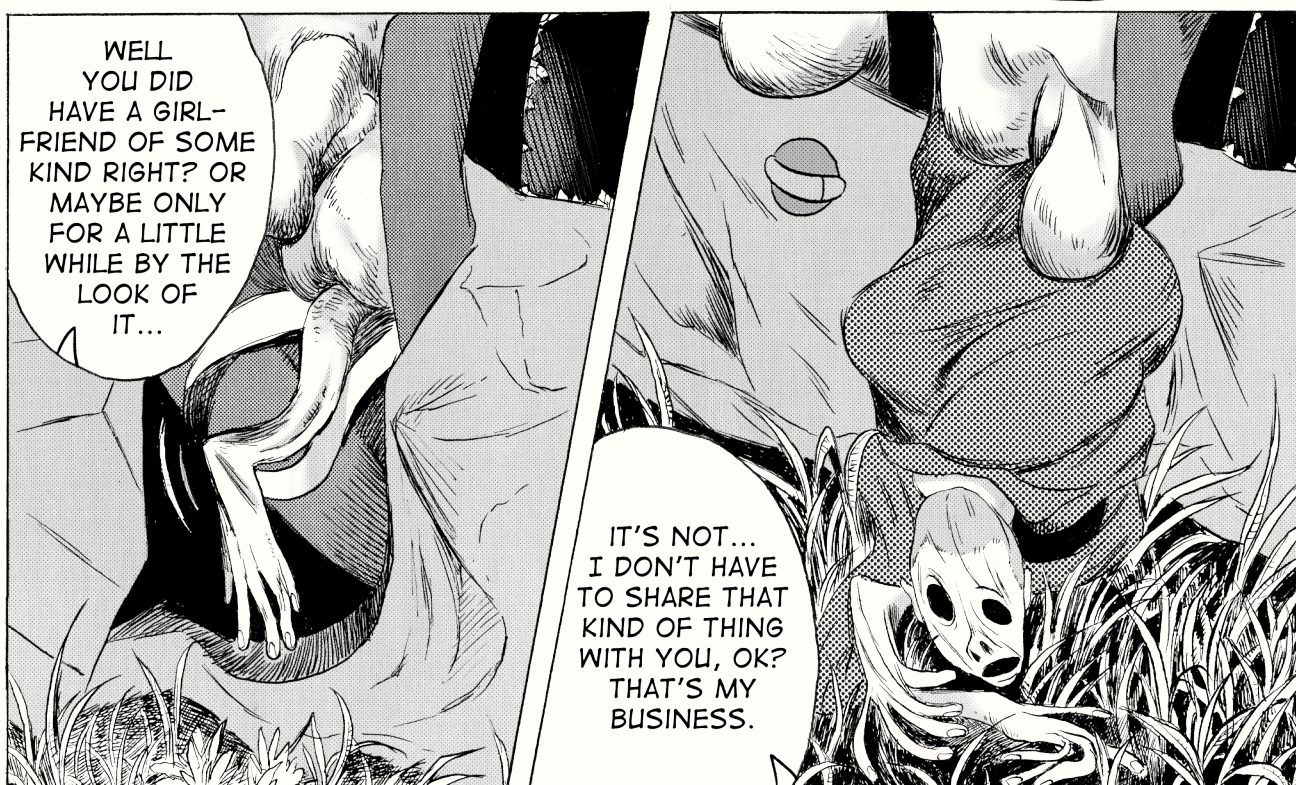
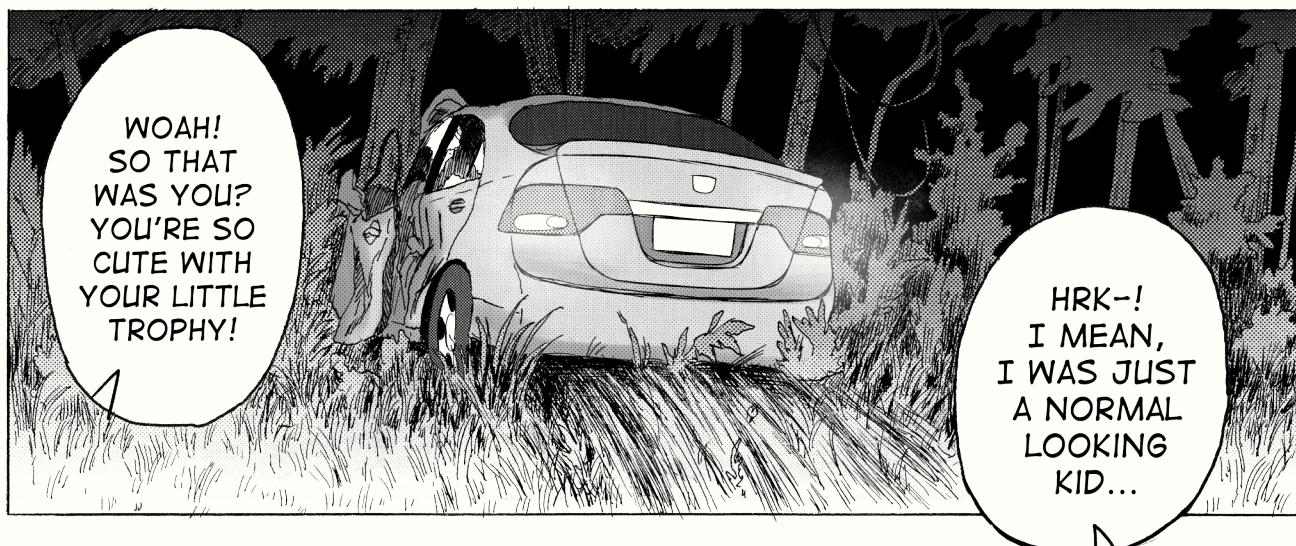














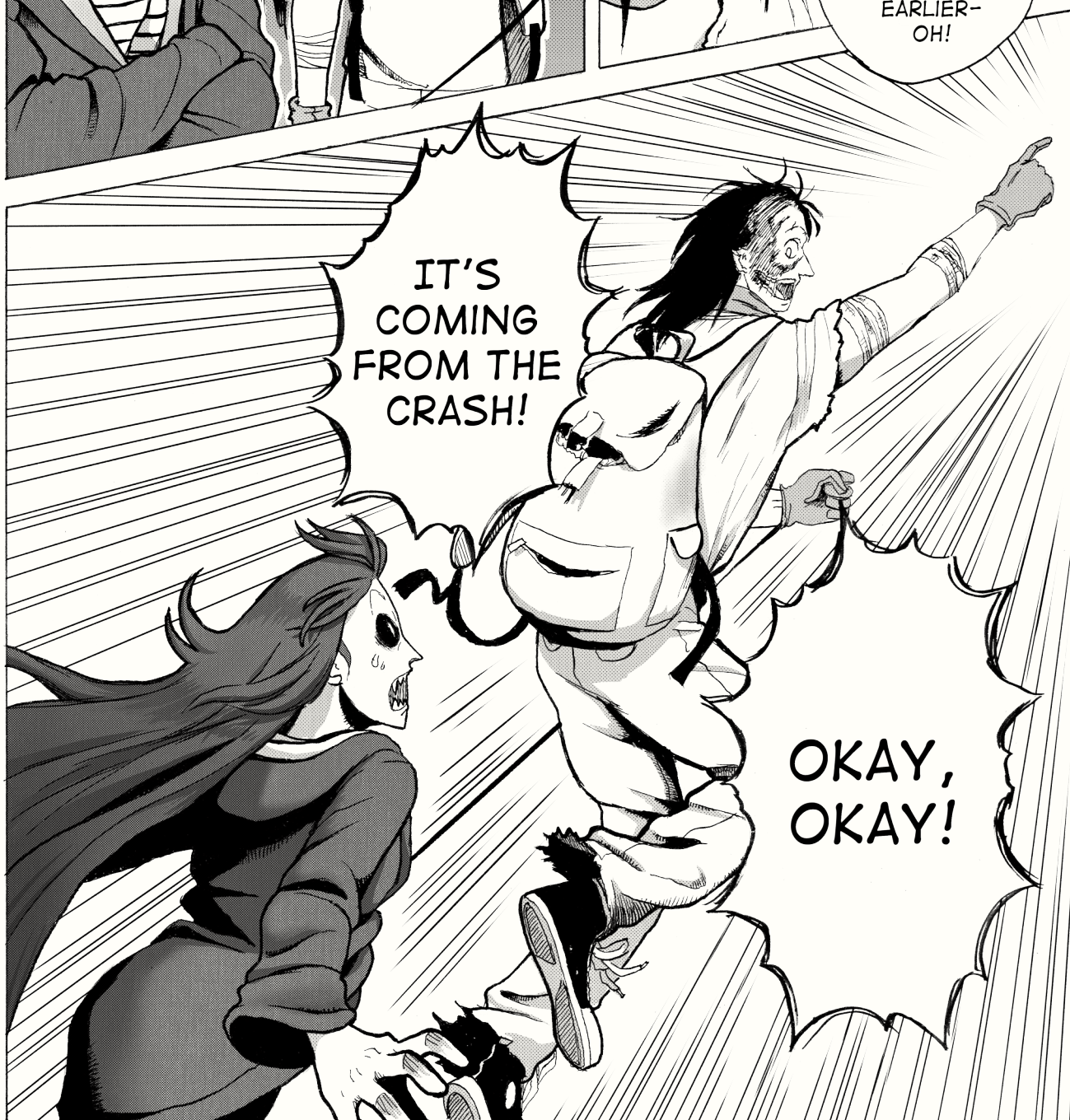
AVEN,
I JUST
GOT HIT BY
A CAR, OKAY?
CAN WE AT
LEAST FIND
A PLACE
TO...



-WHAT
THE HELL
DO YOU
SMELL
THAT?

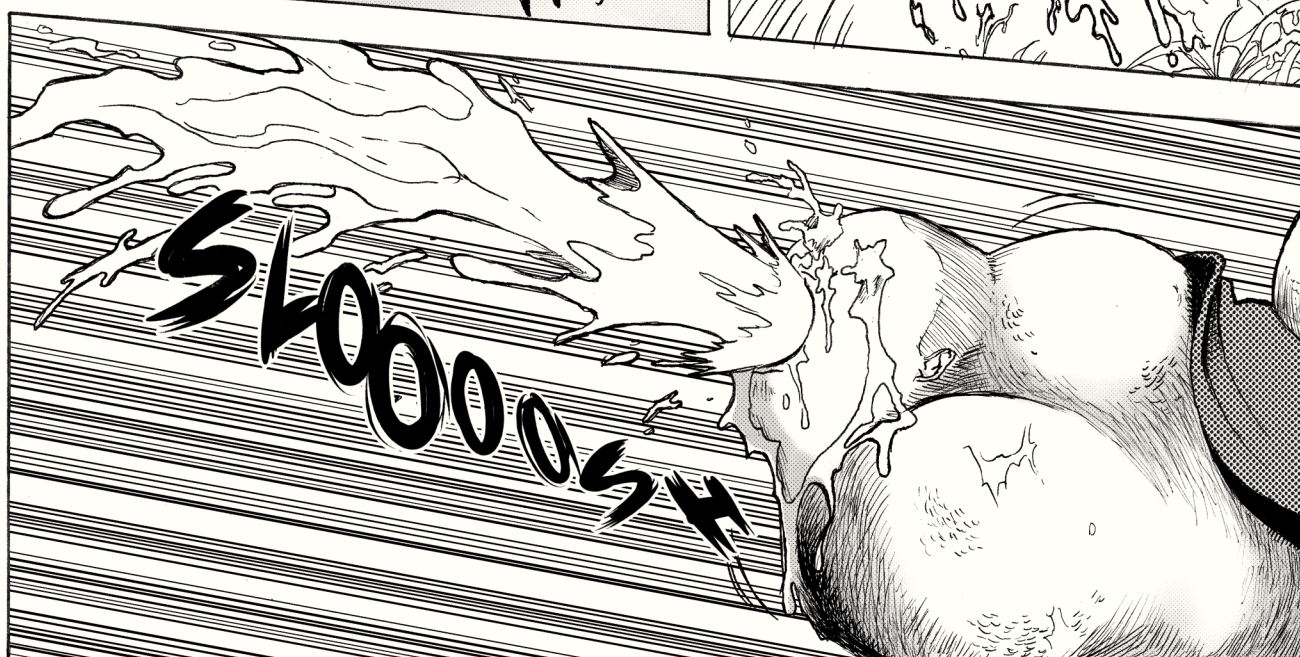
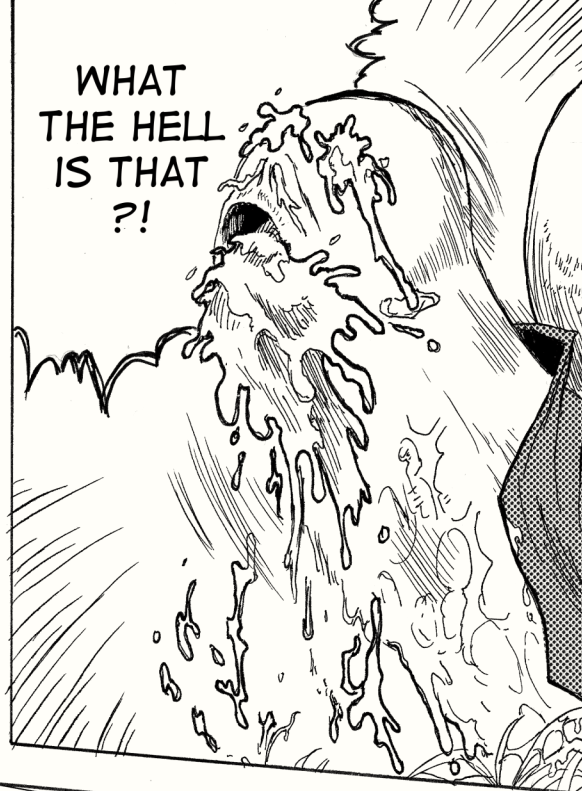
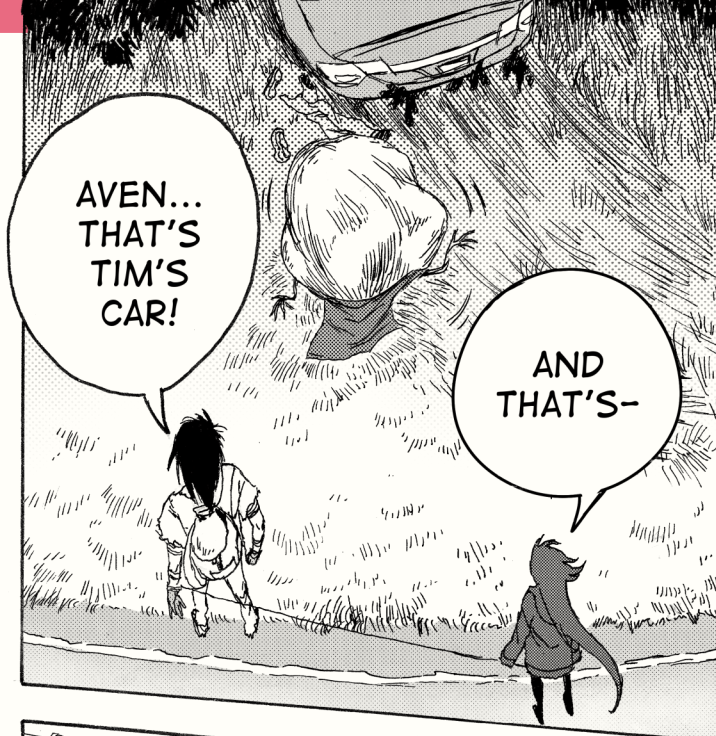
WHAT
DOES IT
SMELL
LIKE?

I DON'T
KNOW, THERE
WAS JUST THIS
NASTY SMELL
WHEN I WAS
IN THE WOODS
EARLIER-
OH!

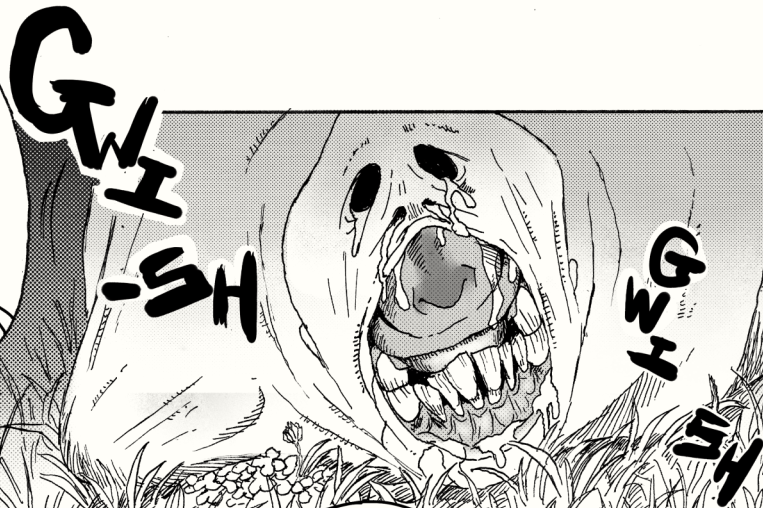


IT'S
COMING
FROM THE
CRASH!

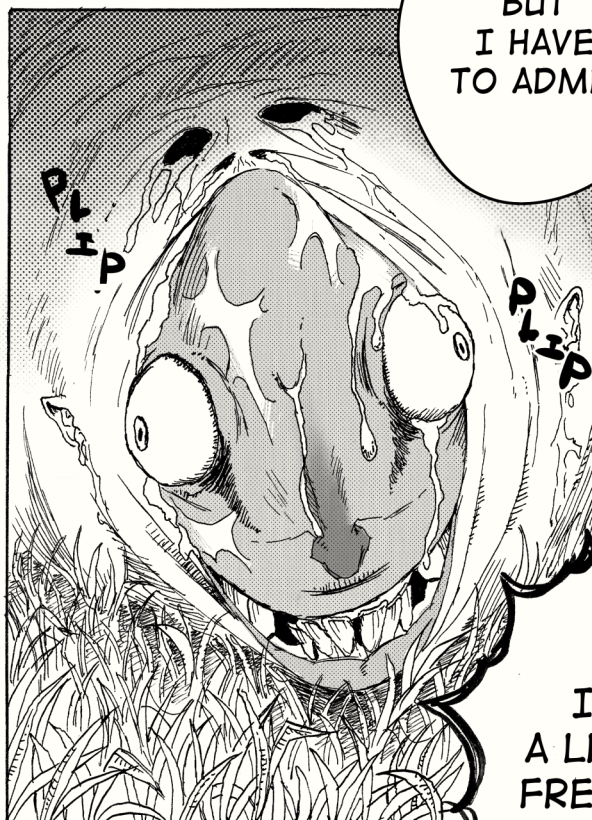
OKAY,
OKAY!



RILIND,
I KNOW
I SOUND
LIKE A
COWARD



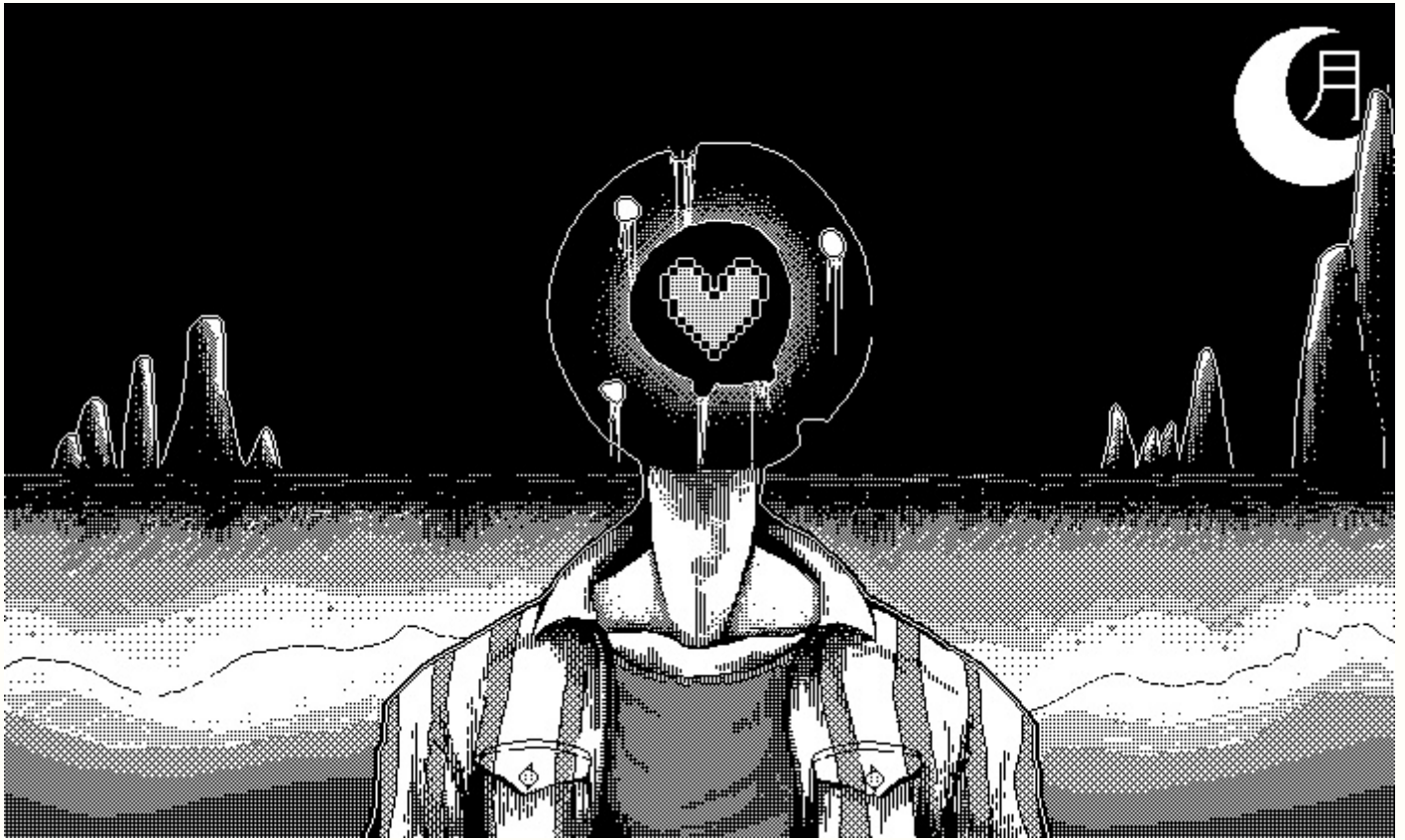
BUT
I HAVE
TO ADMIT



I'M
A LITTLE
FREAKED
OUT RIGHT
NOW!



完



Author: Dunkleshreken



Author: Dunkleshreken



print haiku

>>>>The wires overhead
Buzz and thrum electrically,
Data of the world.

>>>>What reality?
Nothing is truly concrete;
All is subjective.

-不高兴

Author: Alex William Hoffman













朝日ナショナル照明株式会社

朝日ナショナル照明株式会社

五清大明神

秋月
本所
上
本
智也

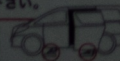
100





エスティマ・アルファード等、一部の車種では
上昇したロック板がドア下部に接触します。
ロック板上昇時にドアを開閉するとキズが
つくことがあります。必ずロック板下降を
確認しドア開閉をして下さい。

ロック板上昇時のドア開閉による
キズ等の被害は致しません。



必ずお読み下さい

※料金確認後、必ずロック板が下降したことを確認の上3
分以内に下車してください。
※間違えた車種番号で確認されても、払い戻しは出来ませ
※駐車前に人や重い物をお乗せにならないで下さい。
※1万円、5千円、2千円、払は使用出来ません。

クレジットカード
その他のカードは
ご利用できません

1枚ずつ
入れて下さい

◆◆◆◆毎度ありがとうございます◆◆◆◆
トラブル防止のため必ずお読みください

駐車場利用約款

1. 駐車スペースの提供

時間貸駐車場は、短時間駐車するためのスペースを有償で提供することを目的とするものであり、車両の点検
 かりするものではありません。

2. 角質

陳國治認為，與陳國治的同事相比，許多黨員更在乎的是陳國治的政績，而非其人品。他說：「（王）一說要他做，一說不要他做，又，要他做他就不做，不要，他就，要也不肯做（的）。」¹⁰ 陳國治之所以被黨內同僚排斥，是因為一些黨員不信任他。陳國治表示，與他同僚的同事關係不好，是因為他「不信任同事」，「不信任他的同事的人」才造成他與同事疏離。他認為許多黨員之所以不信任他，是因為他「不信任同事」。陳國治說，他之所以不信任同事，是因為他「不信任同事的人」才造成他與同事疏離。他認為許多黨員之所以不信任他，是因為他「不信任同事」。

3. 駐車時間

短時間競争車は短時間の競争を目的とする競争車ですから、競争時間は最高40分間までとします。総じて、40時間を超えて競争しないでください。但し、パークジャパンに事前に申請を受けた場合、競争後に他の競争制度が導入されている場合は、この限りではありません。

4. 計算することによって得られる結果

(1) 時間貸駐車場内に駐車することができる車両は、下記の基準に該当するものに限り、これ以外の車両を駐車することはできません。

① 平地に設置する駐車場の場合

車両全長	車両全幅	最高車両重	最低地上高	車両出力
5.0m以下	1.5m以下	ゲート幅2.7m以下 ゲート以内2.5m以下	15cm以上	2.5以下

② 鋼線式及びタフー式の積率算の算式

率同全具	率同全值	率同率同高	率同地上高	率同率同高
5.0m以下	1.9m以下	1.5m以下	1.5m以上	2.0m以下

(2) 上記基準に該当する車両でも、下記の車両は駐車することができません。

- ① 組織上、メンバシップの要件を定める事項は、加入要件に属する事項であり、加入要件の要件に適合しない者が加入することは、当然に禁止される。
- ② オート・リレーティングの要件は、加入要件に属する事項である。
- ③ 工場の工員が労働組合に加入することを拒否し、その結果として労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ④ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ⑤ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ⑥ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ⑦ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ⑧ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ⑨ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。
- ⑩ 労働組合は、加入を拒否する権利を有するが、加入を拒否する権利を濫用して、労働組合の活動が妨げられる虞がある場合は、労働組合は、当該工員を加入を拒否する権利を有する。

五、附錄四

- (1) 計測対象車両の利用者は、計測車に搭乗した乗員等により、計測時間中に計測対象車両を任意に移動させることはできません。
- (2) 計測開始後は、ロック式計測車の場合は、センサーが感知した計測スペースへの乗りかたが計測までの時間、車をシートベルトで固定し、計測時間内への入庫時の乗降から計測時の出庫までの時間とします。
- (3) 計測開始後は、計測車内に乗りかたが正確な乗員により乗降により変更はできません。
- (4) ロック式センサーゲートにおかれず、橋上から乗った乗降員が降りて下さい。

4. 結果方法



ディスプレイ
受話器をとり
Telephone cards
Pick up the receiver

テレホンカー

公衆電話
電話機を
Pick up the receiver

NTT

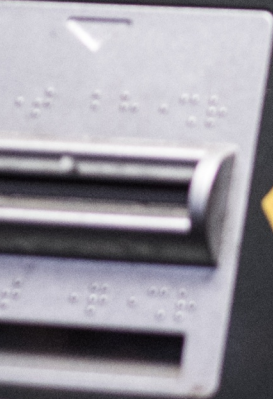
ご利用できます。

Available

音量 / VOL

表示が消えている時はカードが利用できません。
音信音を聴取のうえ硬貨でおかけください。
cannot be used in this phone when the display is blank.
er and there'll be a dial tone, and dial with coin.

カード / TELEPHONE CARD



10

100

100円は、おつりができません。
No partial refunds for 100yen coins.



SOS



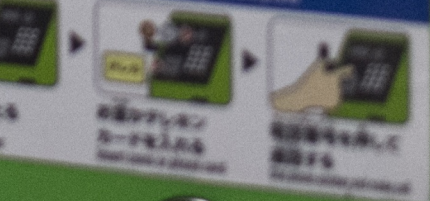
110



119

そのままダイヤルしてください。
Please dial without coin/card.

電話のかけ方 Using a public phone





東 外
m

Roger
6661-2113











線路閉鎖表示板
掲出位置

立入禁止





981-82
Director
William Francoeur

ROM

Author: Troci Hannon

Imperious Verity

In an erstwhile land of disused men who are blase
Where none felt anything but effaced
Whilst exulting in their vacuous works
Followers of Hybris, Goddess of Hubris

A callow traveler comes by this country
He saw the townsfolk walking around numbly
And heard a lilliputian kid yelling at him loudly
Came close to the kid and asked calmly
"Why are you yelling so loudly?"

"This is the land of paragon" answered the kid
However seeing the soil is arid, looking turbid
Traveller understood townsfolk were self-deceived
Kid ran towards the drear fog, traveler continued

He came across an effigy made out of oak and mud
Under the jittery effigy he saw an ancient augury
"The land of dreadful beauty shall continue to be"
He realised, since time immemorial this was the destiny

This once quaint country now looked familiar
He could not leave now that he's become similar
He put up a disdainful look as well, and sat
Looked into Hybris' eyes until the time would end

-efe

Perspicacity of Lilith

Even though you're created from the same clay as Adam
You betrayed him and led him to the deepest pits of despair
Your reasoning was because of unfairness - Mir
But instead of mending you're the one who absconded

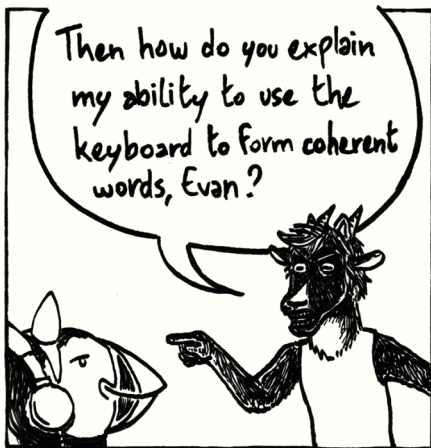
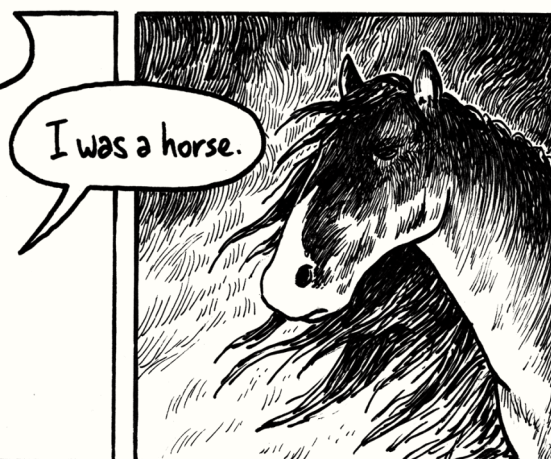
What have you given Adam? Unfaithful with Samael,
Lack of determination; sorrow, misery and anguish
Call the callings of criticism a backbiting
And continue mourning in solitude of cold desert

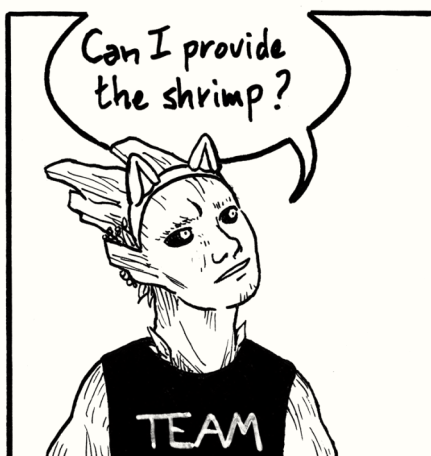
With hope one day His light shines upon you
And fills the void in your heart - work of agony
Rest well; the Night Owl, Lamia, Qarinah
May your wings extend throughout the whole sky

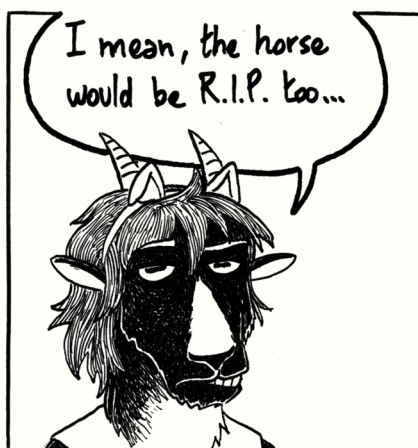
~The Bagdana, The Faust, The Murrah al-Abyad, n; with poppies and white roses

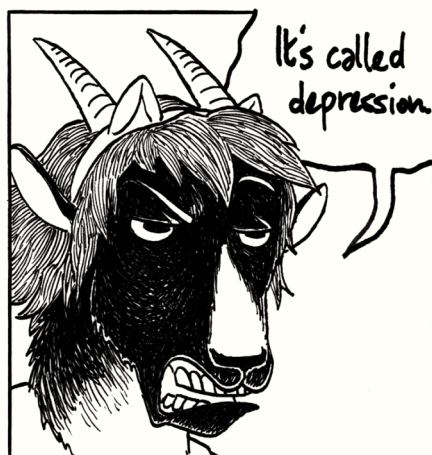
-efe

NYAKLUZA in "HORSES"

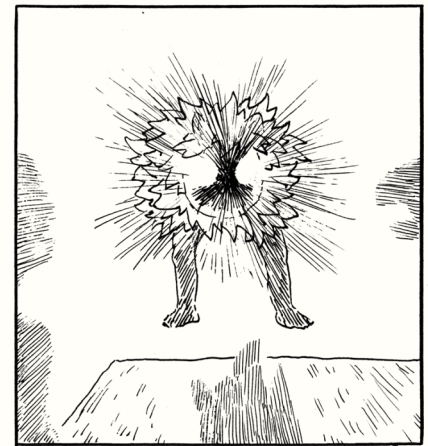
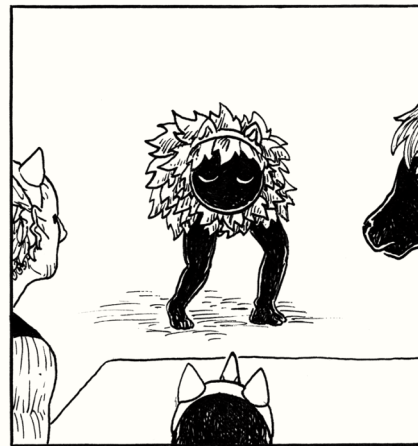
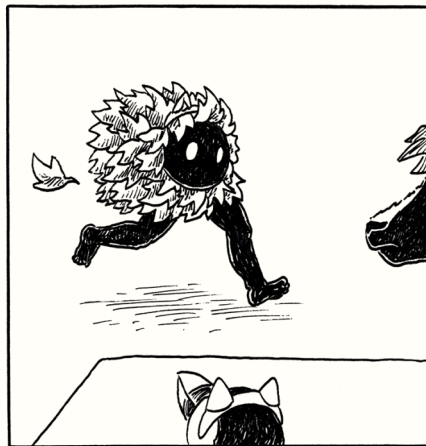
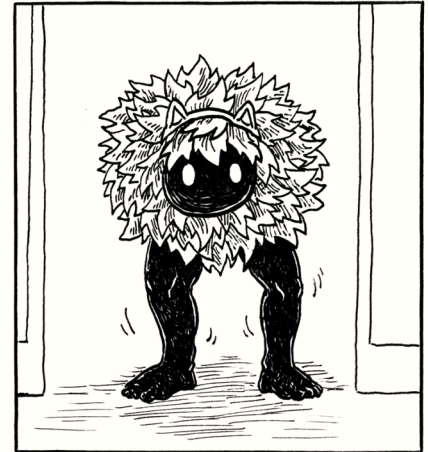
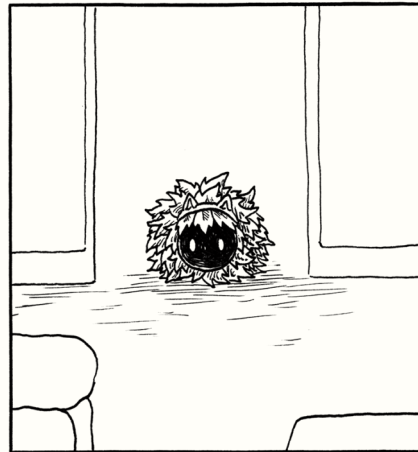










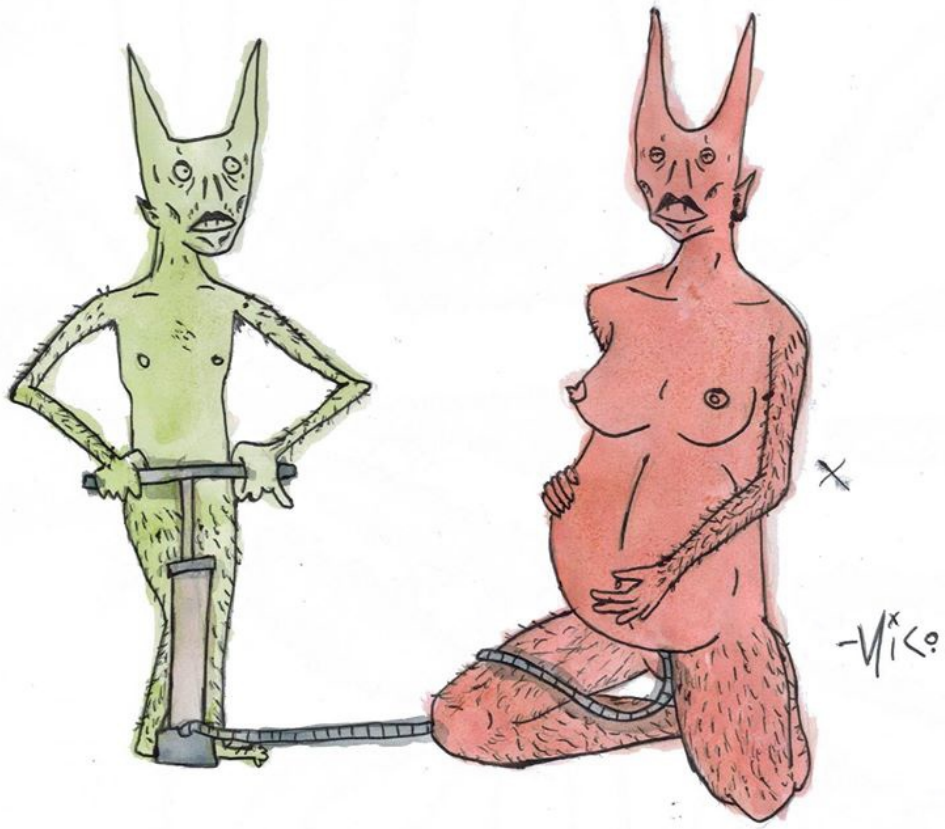


Evan
-2021-

完







THE HEROIC
DEATH NO
LONGER I
FORGET THE
ASS

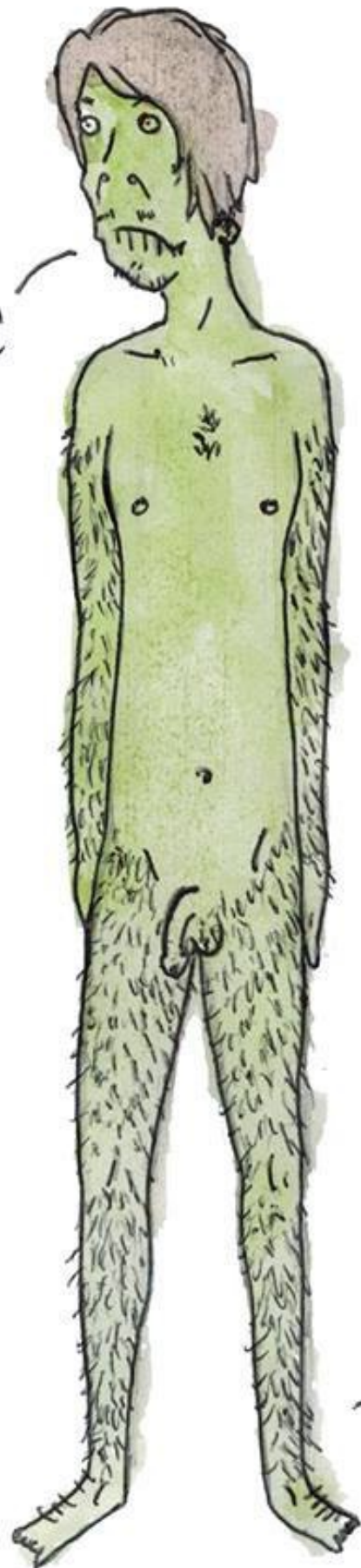




The Baby
is yours
Glynn

Wut Zum
Teufel?

okay



-Mike

Oh
6.9



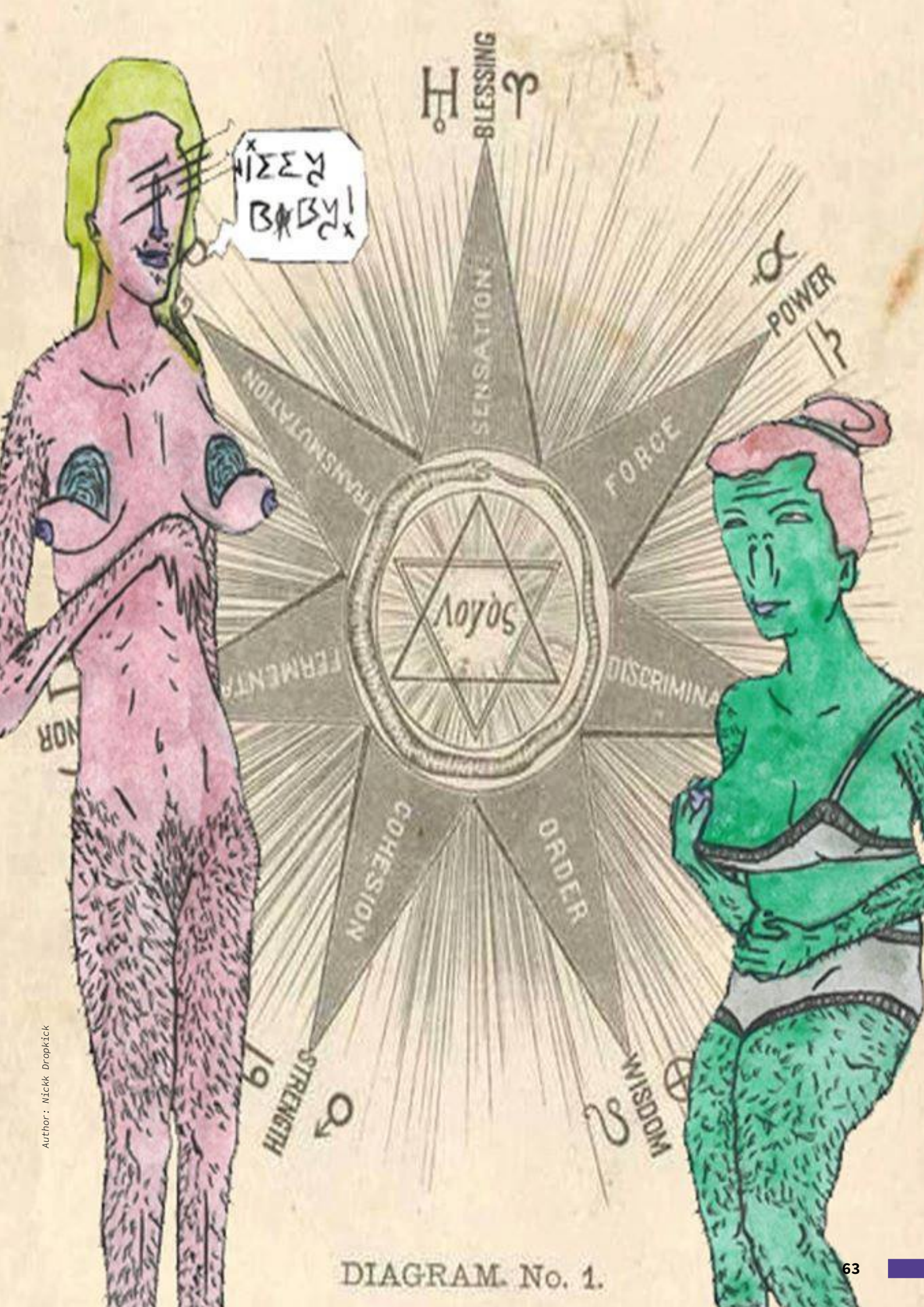
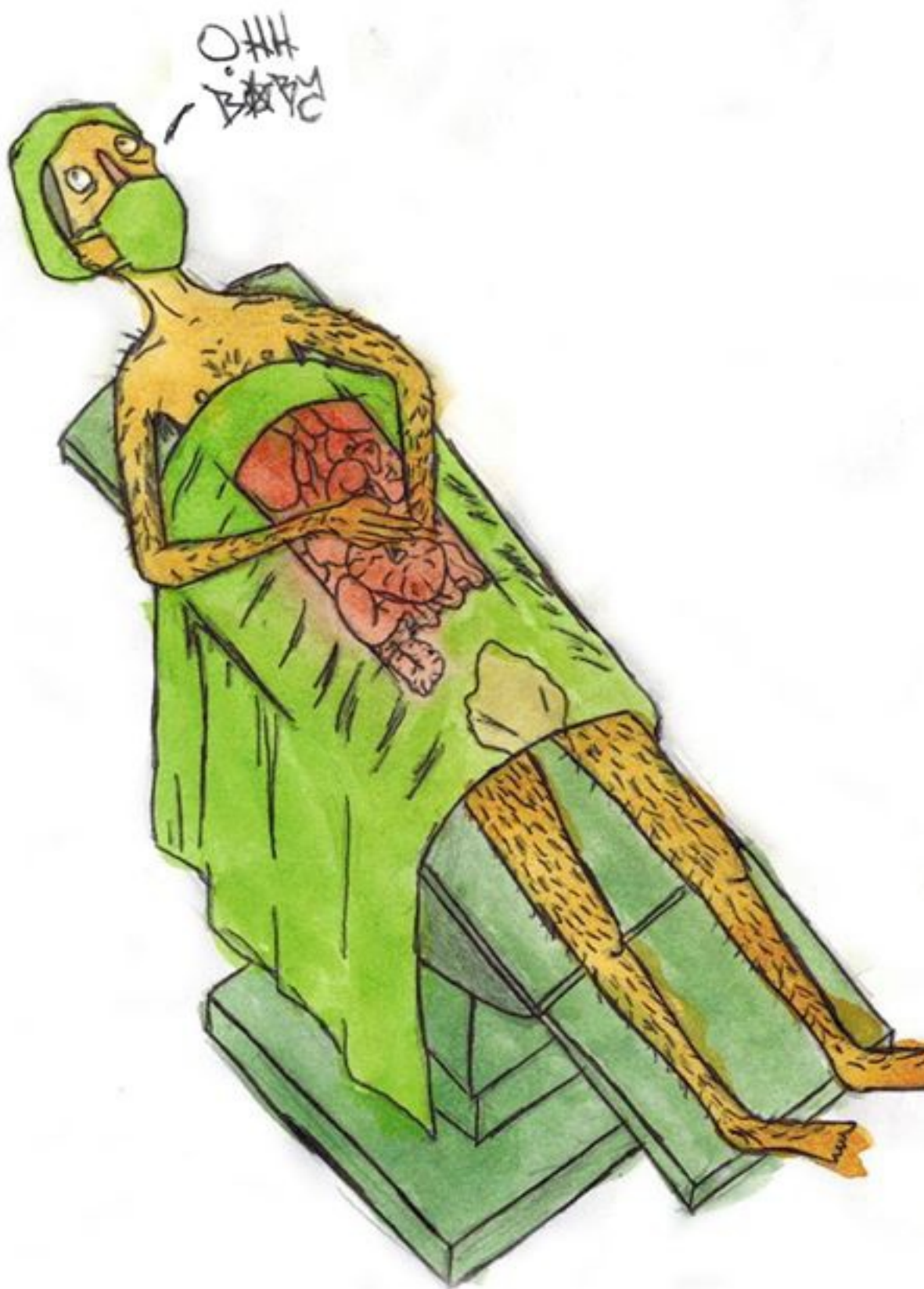


DIAGRAM No. 1.



-V^xLO.



Author: OS


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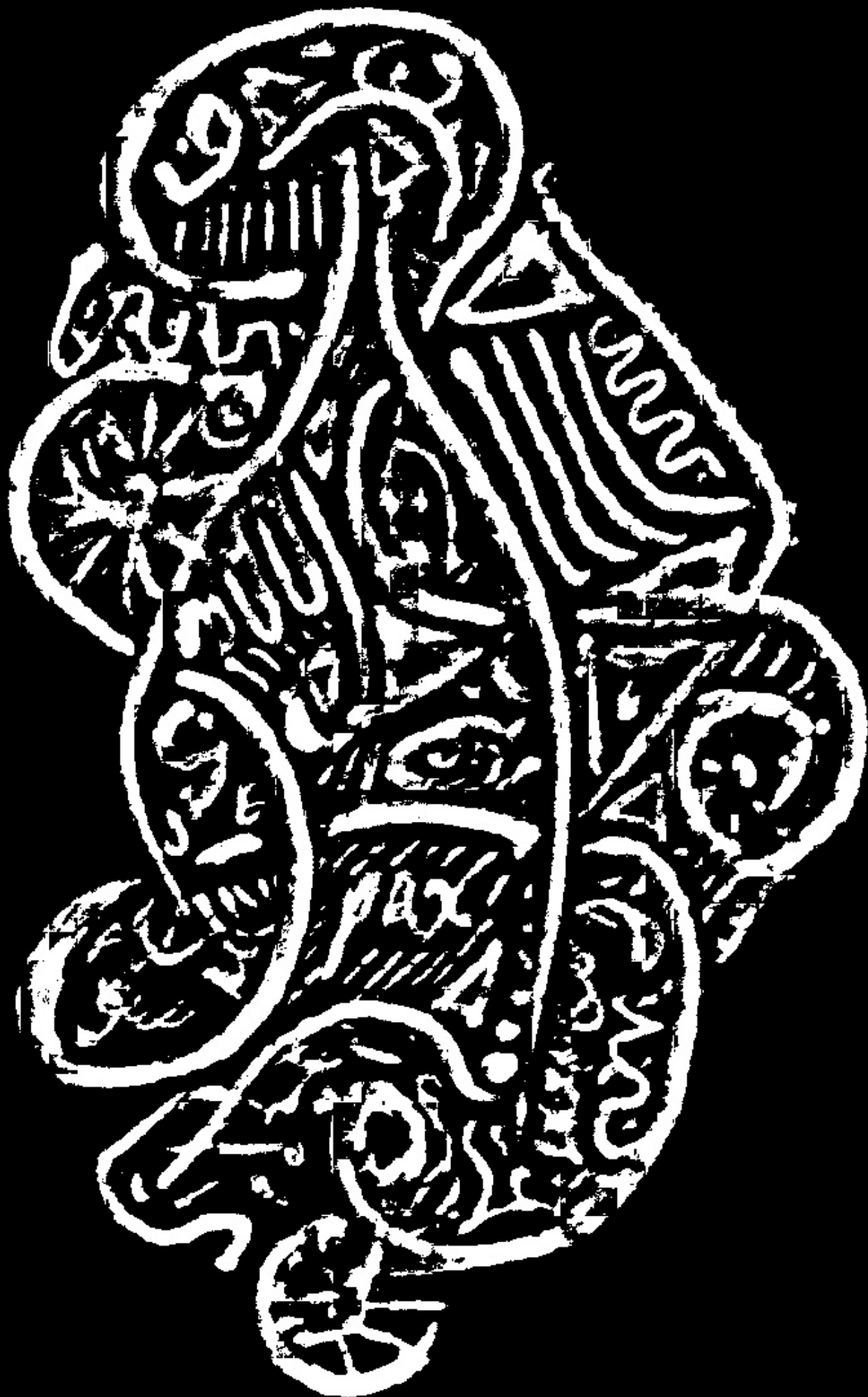



Author: Frederick St. Peter

10.11.18
Rajib









RACER

Mickey

WHAT DOES A COMIC LOOK LIKE

7 APR \$1.75 2.25 IN CANADA

RE'S LOOKING AT YOU, KID
NG. HADDA FEELING YOU'D
HOW UP, EVER SINCE I
EARNED YOU'D DISAPPEARED
WHILE JUMPING ROPE
IN QUEENSLAND.

Snurf.

GASP

I LOVE YOU,
REX RACER.

SOMETHING
WRONG,
REX?

THANKS,
I'M REX.

JUST IN
PASSING,
MS. LACY.

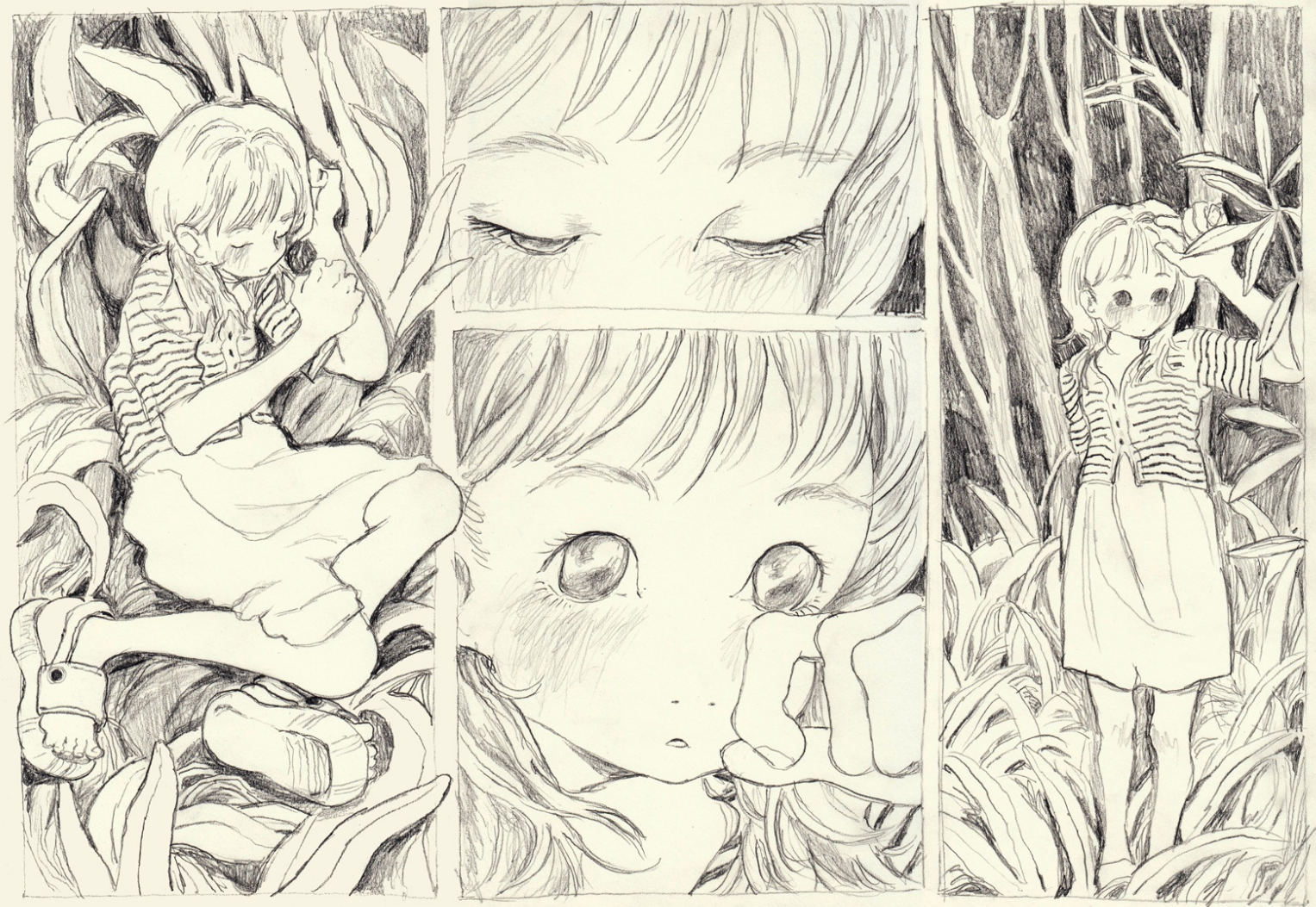
CALL ME
LUCY.

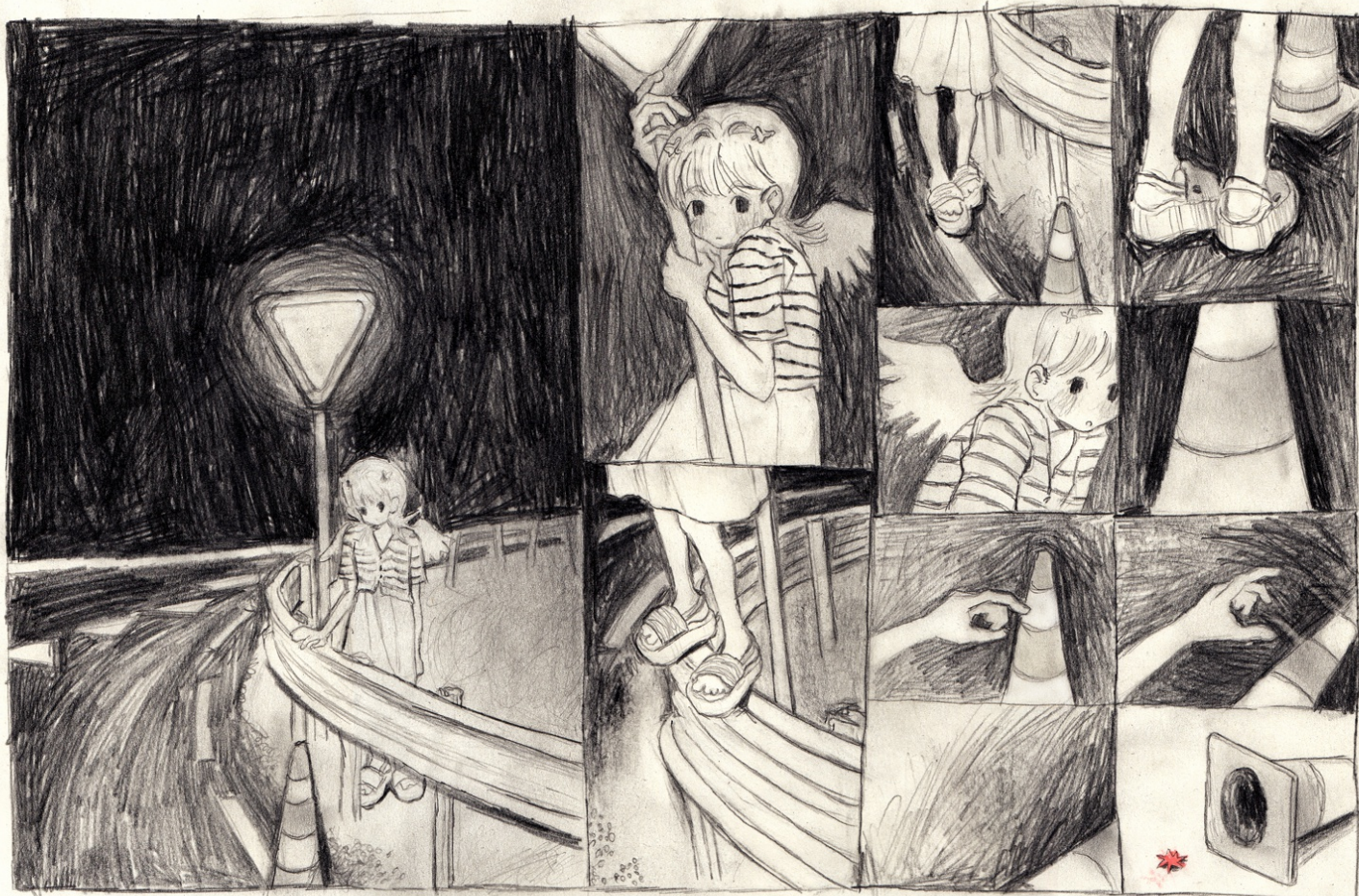


LIKE MYSTERY ROMANCE IS NO ANSWER

IT IS NOT A GENRE

IT IS A MEDIUM DESERVING OF RESPECT

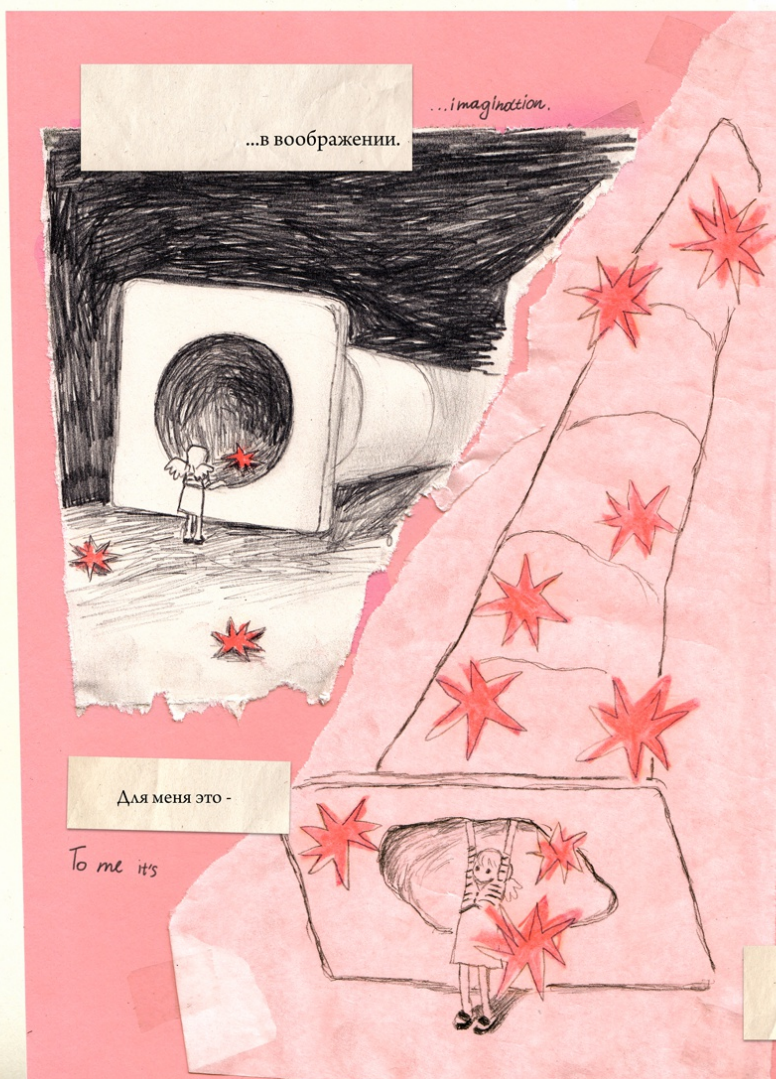




Всё дело...

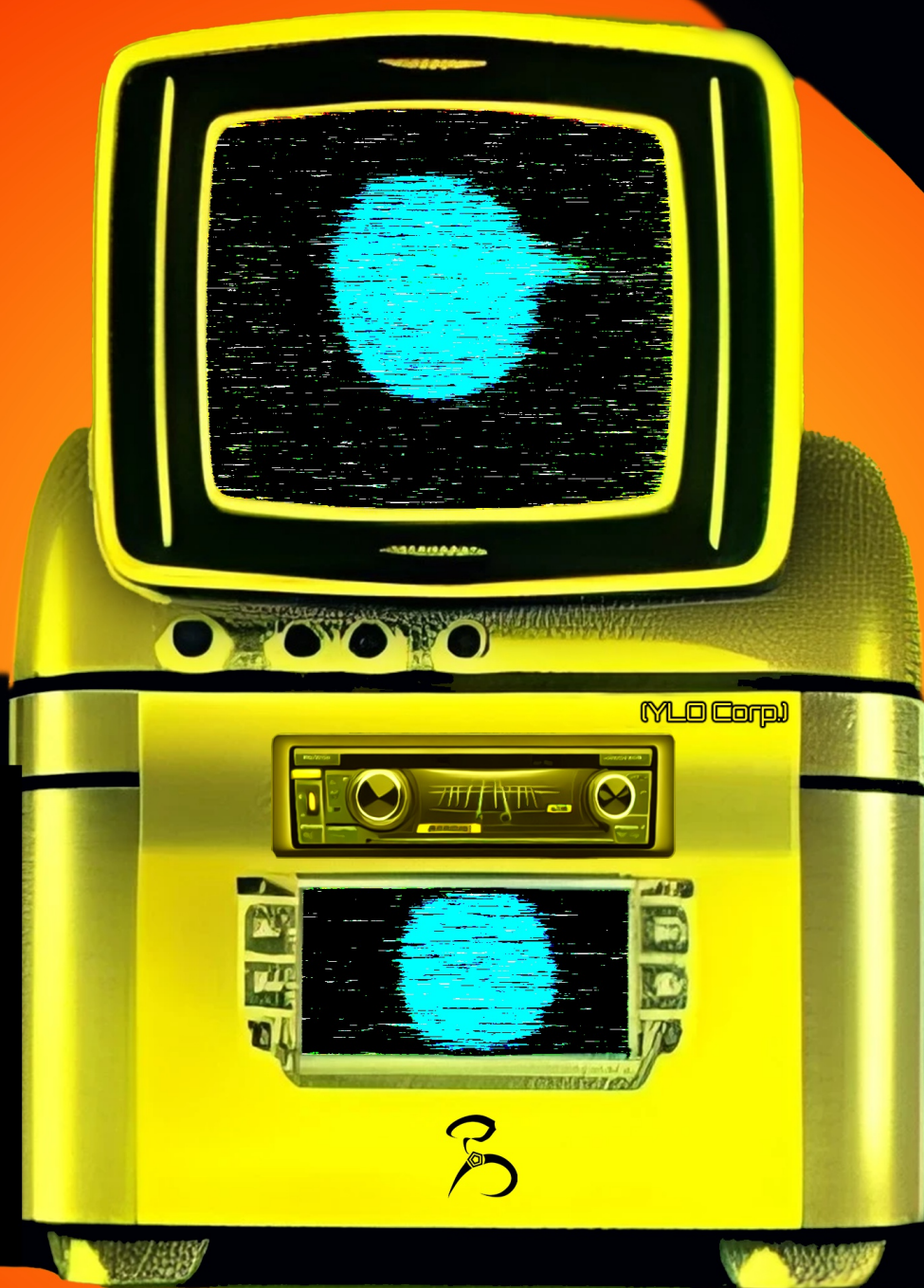
it's all about...

Author: Masha



Ведьмина причудливая шляпа!

a witch's fancy hat!



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**All of your Entertainment
Needs in One Compact Device!**

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YLO Corp. LLC 2XXX





Author: rrp8



Author: skrong











Author: Olaf Modzelewski Mużyk/7882



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Author: Olaf Modzelewski Mużyk/7882



Author: Olaf Modzelewski Mużyk/7882



Author: Olaf Modzelewski Mużyk/7882

*I take a step
Glinting eyes
Shining like emeralds
Big gemstones, face flat
You shouldn't've evolved that way
But you did
and I love it
I take another step
She's so serious
She's so stern
I love the way she never smiles
She's got those big emerald eyes
I take another step
She sticks her leg out
intending to trip me
I fall and graze my knees
I feel like a child again
I get up
I take another step
I stare deep into those photosynthetic eyes*

*A home cat wakes as
summer insects seek shelter.
A fierce fight for life!*

-Lawly

*That late summer night:
An untraceable burning smell
caused by moths and lamps.*

-Lawly

*My ice-cream dream fades,
as I hear the opening
refrigerator*

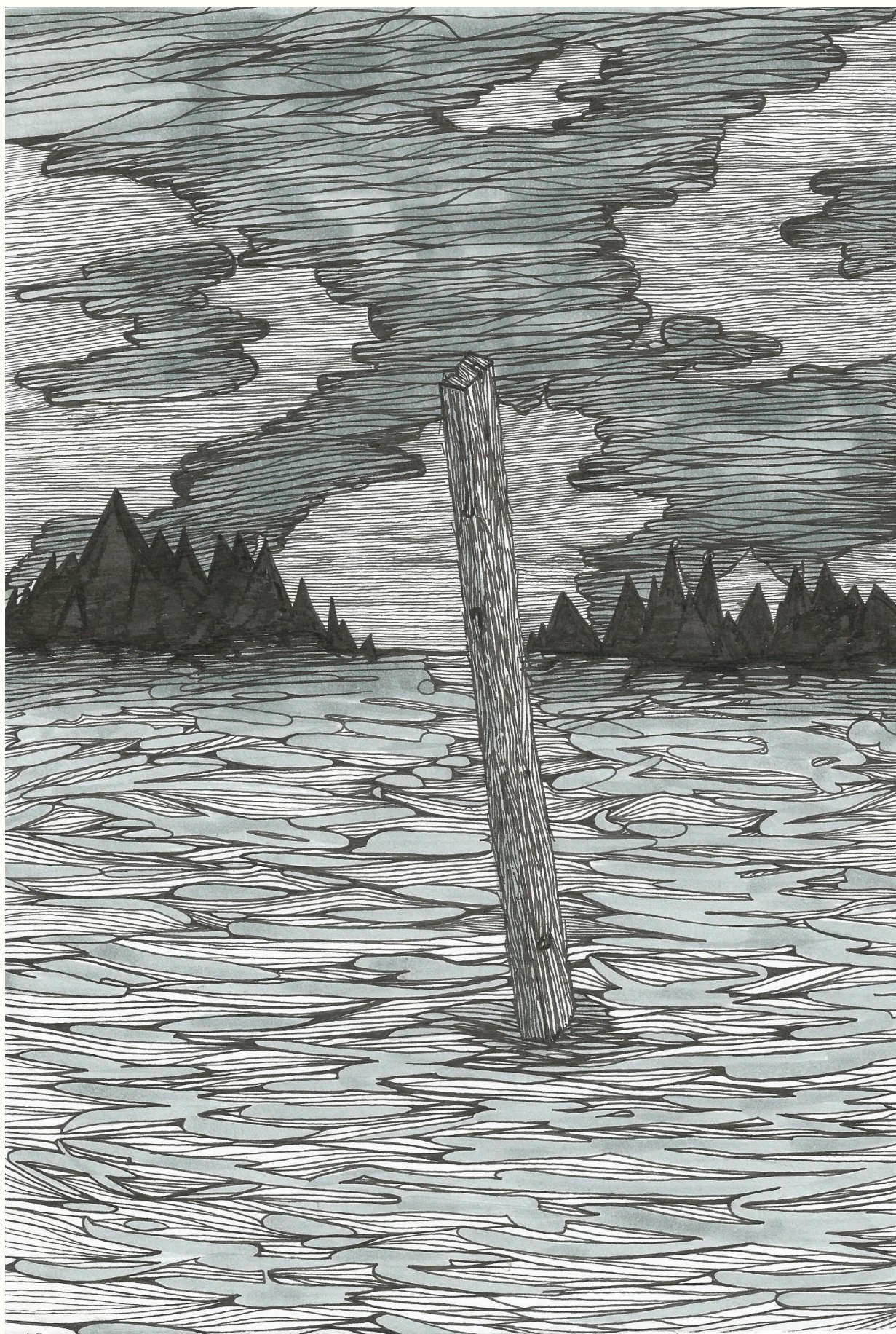
-Lawly

*After the wedding
all the glasses will remain.
Shattered, poisoned.*

-Lawly

*There once was a girl from Kellsfall,
who would seldom talk, if at all.
I inquired as to why,
but heard no reply.
there is no such place as Kellsfall!*

-Lawly



Author: Olaf Modzelewski. Mużyk/7882

Small World

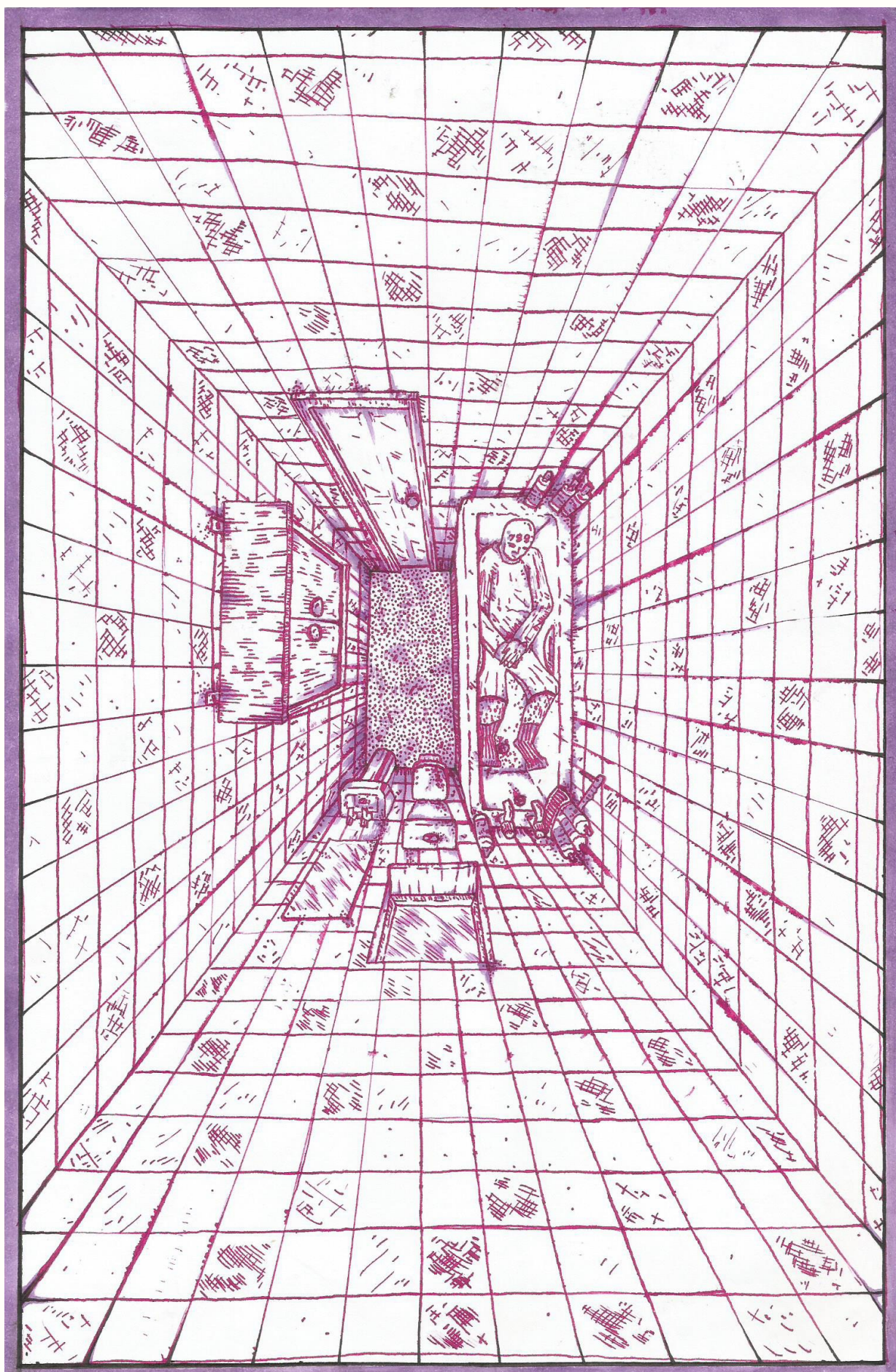
*I asked,
does she know you?
do you know the soft life
she brings to the world?
for the warmth you bring
here must have begun,
someplace, and you,*

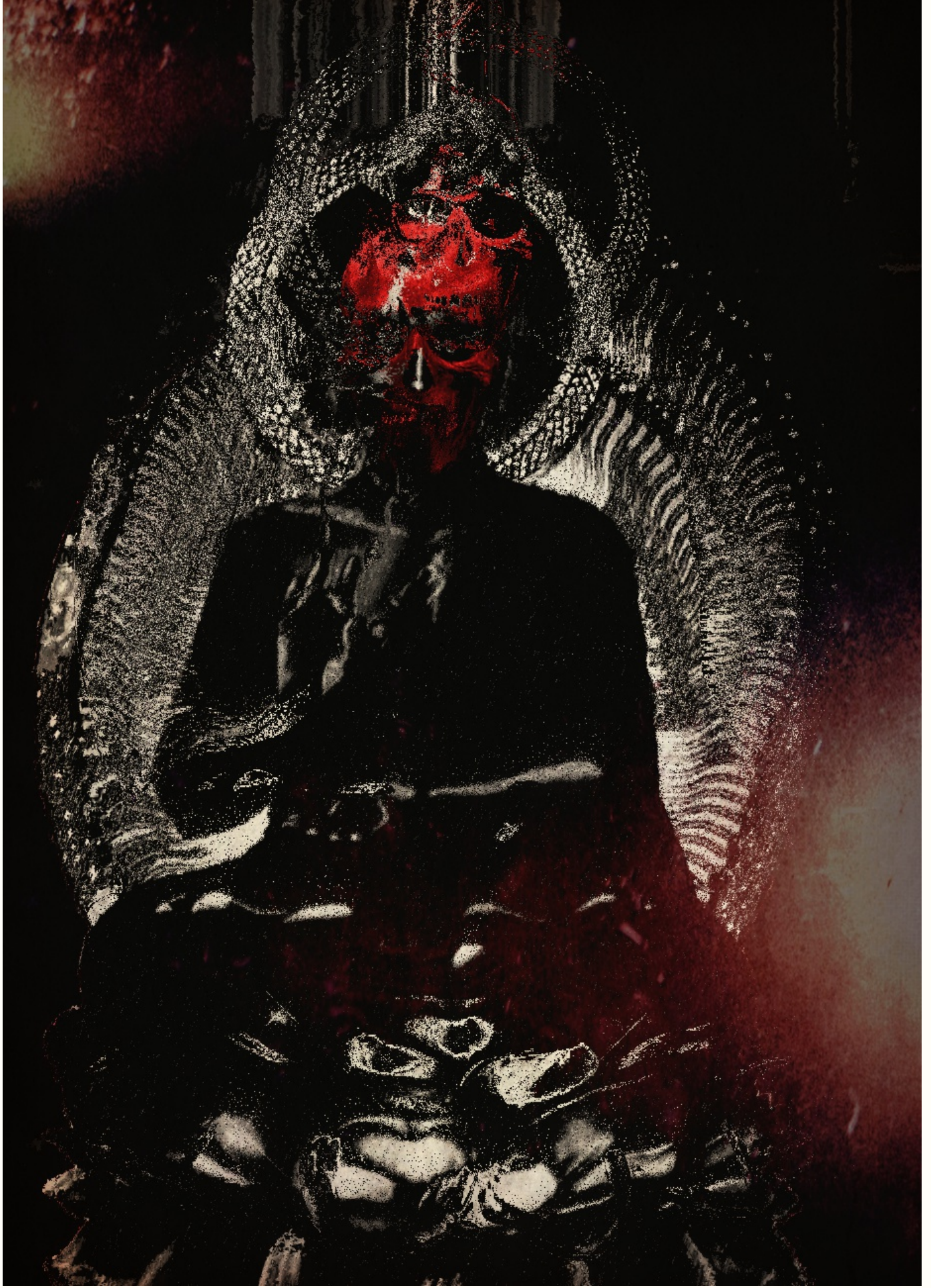
*she keeps her window open
to the world you must have felt
that solace when we're together.
the peace, our plans together -*

do you know what happens when we're together?

*did you relish that between-us, to bring
forth those days we held hands
to her pharmacy, our dresses flowing
in you; Sometimes, wrapped together,
beneath a shawl in refuge from the cold.*

-Nephele





Throne

*here I am,
sitting on my throne;
are you all alone?
are you all alone?*

-kasse

Wrath

by Roy Miller

It was a Wednesday night, and those are truck days at the store. Stocking during any other day is no problem, but doing the truck is a real bitch. Pick up the pallet. Move the pallet. Unload the pallet. Rinse and repeat for eight hours. The most mind-numbing work you can imagine. If anything would drive someone to kill, that was it.

I finished unloading the last of the pallets from the truck and situated them to the right like we're supposed to if we can't get everything onto the floor by the end of the night, but apparently something about that day had my boss' hemorrhoids flaring. He walked around the back area, flinging his arms all over the place to indicate his displeasure at various objects. When he got to me, exasperated and petulant, I could see the constipation in his eyes.

"What is this, Gary? You've been here for eight hours and still have half a load waiting to hit the floor? What have you been doing all day?"

I bit back the urge to spit in his face. "I've been by myself. This is usually a two-person job and Marlita never showed up."

"Well I expect every employee to step up and get the job done in the face of adversity." Gabe, whose name I liked to spell with a y so it said Gaybe, waved his hand again at the pallets closest to us. "At least get this out of the way before you leave."

"My shift's over, I'm clocking out and going home."

"Do it or it's your job."

His last sentence settled on the back of my tongue like you would imagine dandelion seeds would on a hot summer day.

When you're running around with your friends and a deep breath sucks them in and plants them in your dry mouth, or even down your throat. So you cough and cough until they get dislodged and you make a bee line for the garden hose. Unfortunately for me, the only garden hose in that situation was hanging up for sale.

"You're really going to fire me over a few pallets that Josh can finish in the morning?"

"I'm giving you a choice," said Gabe, "you can either do your job now or find a new one tomorrow."

The corporate voracity in his voice made me sick, and in that my decision was made. I pulled my cigarettes out, lit one in front of him, much to his shock and dismay, then stood and took a drag off it with a smile.

"Alright then Mr. McMannis, you'll need to vacate the premises immediately and your last check will be mailed to the address on file."

Gabe began to walk away with the hurry of someone that had too much to do in too little time. I flipped him off with my right hand, adjusted my package with my left, then set out to find something to drink.

Most bars have some kind of Thirsty Thursday special, but since it was Wednesday, I opted for pitchers instead of shots. The bar was dark and smelled like the artificial nacho cheese you get at sporting events. Since it was only nine thirty the place wasn't particularly busy and the jukebox was eerily silent. I worked through the first pitcher in about thirty minutes and slowed down on the second, taking time to people watch. My grandma used to do it a lot and I picked up the habit, even though most people were as exciting as a colonoscopy.

Two couples came in around the end of my second beer of pitcher two. Both of the girls were the slutty type, choppy, dyed hair and fake tan skin. One of them was a little bit taller than the other and looked like she had a little beaner in her. I worked with a guy from Mexico once, dumber than shit and barely spoke English. Always brought his own lunch that looked like something I threw up after too much Evan Williams. Anyway, I think he died of a heart murmur.

The other was about as bleach-blond as you could possibly get, with too much makeup and a loud, annoying laugh.

She spoke really angrily, her voice carrying all the way across the bar, the words heavy and offensive to the senses. She reminded me of that one conservative mouthpiece from whatever piece of shit news website she spouts her hot garbage on. Just looking at her pissed me off.

While the two guys stopped at the bar to order drinks the girls made their way to the jukebox. I instantly sighed and downed the rest of my glass, preparing for the verbal diarrhea that was about to seep out of some clown's mouth like the rectal discharge of a woman injured in childbirth. Money, sluts and drugs. 'I'll kill you if you cross me.' The only experience half of the bona fide retards that talked about that stuff had with it was just that; talking about it.

Music started and they gathered at one of the billiards tables. The stockier of the two guys set up the game, though he looked absolutely ridiculous doing so. His face seemed to turn a deeper shade of red with each step he took, as if the task at hand was the most laborious thing he'd done in weeks. Bending down to pull the rack out of the side of the table practically made sweat bead on his forehead.

I couldn't watch anymore. Every single thing they did irritated me to the point that I wanted to smash my glass against the table and watch the shards as they expelled outward. In my head the fantasy grew; I took the broken glass and drove it into the fat man's neck, twisted and pulled away.

The whores screamed but it didn't shake me, I just stood there watching the blood pour out.

"Would you like another pitcher, sir?" the waitress asked, jarring me from my fantasy. She stood with one hand on her hip and looked down at me with a genuine smile, one that made my stomach turn even more. "No," I said sharply, "I think it's time for me to go."

I pulled out my wallet and handed her a twenty, which covered the two pitchers and a tip for her and the bartender. She took it with a cheery "have a good night" and made her way over to the table the two couples had draped their coats over. The beaner reached out and touched the waitresses' hair, no doubt fake-complimenting it like women do. I took one last look at the fat man's neck and the cholesterol-thickened arteries pulsed the same way a distance runner's might.

It was cold outside but the alcohol had already raised my body temperature. I was still aggravated and Gaybe's stupid fucking face floated in the front of my mind's eye. He was slightly cross-eyed and I routinely wondered during his mini safety rants in the back room if maybe I punched him in the face hard enough I could knock his eye straight. He seemed like the kind of person to be self-conscious of it, with his corporate providence and collection of silk ties, so whenever he talked to me, I made it a point to stare directly at it the entire time.

I continued to even though he was nowhere near, in my mind's eye, and the image drove me to the liquor store.

The guy that owned the store was an old 'Nam vet named Grizzly who was missing his left arm. 'Fuckin' swamp rats ambushed us during a medevac,' he told me. I don't have any particular sympathy for soldiers, so I didn't say anything. I mean, you go to another country and start shooting people, you're gonna get shot back at. If someone tears you a new one, you kind of asked for it. You know?

Inside the store was little more than the buzzing of fluorescent lighting and coolers. He carried everything you could imagine, from thirty-year-old single malt to Wild Irish Rose, but as the area was filled with mostly small-town hicks the only things that ever sold were dog piss and malt liquor. The good bottles had dust and the cases of Natty Ice up front were fresher than a cocky little prick after Friday night lights.

Grizzly was sitting behind the counter with a Guns & Ammo magazine lying open to a slick-looking Sig Sauer P226. When he looked up and saw me he mechanically reached behind himself and grabbed a fifth of Canada House from the shelf. I tossed a ten-dollar bill on the counter and spun his magazine around so I could check out the weapon.

Without looking up from the page I asked, "How many kids you think a pissed off white boy could take out in a school cafeteria before he gets caught?"

He pushed out one of those single, silent chuckles and shook his head. "I don't know, boss. Miss your calling?"

"Beats me. I do feel like I could separate a soul from a body right now." I reached across the counter and grabbed the bottle before he could bag it, pulled the stopper out of the mouthpiece and took a swig of it right there in the store. "You ever feel dangerous? Outside of the military I mean. Like you could, I don't know, reduce a human being to nothing? Make it so he doesn't exist anymore?"

"You don't need a bottle son, you need a goddamn therapist." He gave me my change with a sigh and planted his eyes back on the magazine in front of him. "You sound worse than some of the boys did when they got home."

The heat of the drink ripped through my veins and all I could do was smile. "Yeah, well." He looked at me in wait for the rest of my sentence, but I just turned and left.

It was starting to get dark outside. The sky dusted with pastels and the wind kicked up, pushing the increasingly bitter air down my whiskey-heated throat. I walked aimlessly for a block or two before I realized I was around the corner from the park I used to play at as a kid. It was still light enough that by the time I got there some kids were still running around with a football, little puffs of cold air cigarette smoke billowing from their mouths.

Two of the three kids looked like they were practicing plays while the third, the youngest one, pranced around, trying his hardest to be included.

He acted as a defenseman but the two bigger kids just plowed him over like he wasn't even there. The biggest kid, who I guessed to be around ten years old, drove his shoulder into the little kid's neck area, then proceeded to showboat and dance while the kid laid on the ground and cried.

Seeing the youngest boy in a ball on the ground drugged up an anger in me that I hadn't felt in years. I began doing double shots from the bottle. Two by two by two. His huddled mass shuddered and shook; clouds of water vapor formed by hot tears and chest heaving emanated from all sides. I imagined the cloud enveloping his whole body, so thick you couldn't see through it. Then the boy shot out like a canon, nothing but teeth and claws and tore the kid that so easily laughed at his pain to shreds. The kid shrieked and thrashed violently, but the boy had transcended; his rage had manifested into something terrifying.

The middle-sized kid backed up with his hands in the air, obviously trying to plead with the blood-soaked monster in front of him. The boy seethed and his anger poured out of him as a crimson fog, eventually obstructing my view. As soon as they disappeared, I heard the scream of someone that could only be described as simultaneously experiencing great pain and coming to terms with the fact that they were going to die.

The sound of a car turning onto the side street behind me broke me out of my trance and I took a long pull from the bottle.

After getting hurt the little kid sat on the ground by himself and tore grass out by the fistful. The middle-sized kid, who I shortly after realized was his older brother, picked him up and helped him over to their bikes. The night was ending, and they were heading home to probably have some soup and play video games. That left just me and the bully. What a night for him to be the last one out.

He picked up his bike and adjusted the seat a little. The two other kids had gone one way while the bully's bike faced the opposite, toward me. He got on and began to pedal, and by the time he reached the bench the other kids were out of sight. The sun was dropping fast and there was no more traffic. I saw his face as he was about to pass me. Blue eyes and perfectly straight teeth. The moment might have passed as nothing more, until his mouth curled up into the kind of sneer that shitty little rich kid has when you compare an object and his is obviously of better quality. I saw that sneer and something inside me unhinged.

I gripped the neck of the fifth and swung at him as he passed, connecting the fat part of the bottle with his forehead. The sound, oh god. The sound of glass reverberating the connection with bone, the high-pitched sparkle of shards as they collided mid-air. I felt the shockwaves travel through my forearm to my elbow and before I knew it the pint-sized asshole was unconscious on the ground a few feet away from me. The front tire of his bike was still spinning.

Since we were still in an open area, I tried to make it look like he had crashed, leaning down to pick him up and lay him on the bench. I glanced around quickly to see if I could spot anyone watching, but I didn't see anything, so I picked his bike up and pushed it over to the bench. After sitting him up and swinging one of his arms over my shoulder I transferred his body to the bike, holding him up the best I could, and began to wheel him out of the area.

It was just minutes before darkness and the blueish-purple of the sky made the blood pouring down his face look like sludge. I vaguely noticed that I was making my way toward my old house, a bit of muscle memory coming back from all of the years playing in the area. I cut between two houses as quietly as I could and wheeled the bike into my old backyard, stopping just short of the big willow tree. I pulled the kid off the bike and sat him against the tree, then set the bike by the fence so it wouldn't stick out.

Memories of playing baseball with neighborhood friends flooded back to me. I stood frozen for what seemed like a good five minutes, watching a ghost-like vision of my younger self and my friends playing games like TV Tag and Hit the Deck. The not-quite-corporeal versions of us passed through me like smoke, laughing or arguing about who won. A light flashed on in one of the windows of the house, and at first I couldn't tell if it was in my vision or if it was real, but reality slammed into me like I did my freshman English teacher at my ten-year high school reunion and I remembered

that a small, dick-headed little kid was unconscious a few feet away from me. I decided not to take any chances.

I dragged him to the other side of the tree, where I couldn't be seen from the windows. The house behind my old one faced the road adjacent to it on the right, and the part of it that was facing me was the garage. It was completely dark then, and I couldn't even see if the kid was still bleeding or not. I didn't really care, either.

More than once I caught myself fantasizing about what it would be like to end another person's life. Usually it was at work when I had to deal with some shithead customer with a smile on my face when all I really wanted to do was cave his face in. Even back in high school I fantasized about taking the good-looking girls out on dates, pumping them full of compliments to make them feel all important, then watching all of that hot air leak out through a puncture wound in her throat. I never actually thought I would do it, though.

The kid squirmed a little and I realized I had spaced again, but since he was coming to I couldn't afford to do it again. I leaned over him and squinted hard, trying to see if his eyes were open. They flickered a little bit, and as mine adjusted to the darkness I got a clearer picture of his face. The right side was coated with a thick layer of partially-congealed blood. As I watched him twitch and eventually open his eyes, all I could hear were the cries of the little boy who just wanted to be included.

And the floodgates opened.

His eyes opened all the way, and when he realized he was in an unfavorable situation, the look of fear I would imagine all serial killers masturbate to contorted his face into an almost animalistic look. He tried to get up, but I slammed my fist down on his chest and pinned him back to the ground. Before he could cough at the sudden expulsion of air I covered his mouth, shifting so I could put my knee into his solar plexus and apply pressure. I stared into his face as hard as I could, as if I was trying to bore forty years of pent up aggression into his soul.

Seconds felt like years. Every shitty thing in the world flooded into me at that moment, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. Every time I fucked up as a kid and had to pay the price. Every time my parents ignored me and every time I asked for help with something in school and never got it. Every news story of mass shootings and drone strikes overseas leaving ditches full of dead kids. Every time the asshole got the girl and every time the underdog left broken and discouraged.

I wrapped my hands around his throat and squeezed as hard as I could.

His body tried as hard as it could to escape. I felt the kicking and punching as his survival instinct kicked in. He was no match for me. I squeezed harder and gritted my teeth, chipping the left canine. His kicks and punches became seizure-like; his body was starting to give up. I watched his eyes bulge out.

The blood vessels burst one by one and redness overtook them. A froth started forming at the edges of his mouth. As the struggle started to wane, I watched the life leave his eyes.

All at once, the anger, the hatred, the sadness, all of it, melted away. I didn't even feel buzzed anymore. It was like a beam of light had gone through my chest and stripped away everything negative I'd ever felt. It was a moment of pure euphoria. I tipped my head back and breathed in deeply through my nose. The crisp air felt welcome in my lungs and my shoulders felt lighter than they ever had. I imagined that that was the way the people on those televangelist infomercials were pretending to feel.

I finally opened my eyes and looked down to see the body at my feet, and just as quickly as it came, it disappeared. Seeing the lifeless husk of some self-important turd just reminded me that there were millions more of them out there, talking and laughing and shitting and fucking and creating more of themselves. He was a drop in the sea, and my shining moment of bliss, my contribution to the cleansing of the scourge of the Earth, was essentially meaningless.

And on top of that, I still had to bury the body. **[BFZ]**

How Daddymum Foundie-f'rst House

by Jim Meirose

Maybe.

No?

‘splain as bestus aw cando please Maybe.

Oh, thanky Peter-San one?

Yes, No. Gut; the cried out all crying seeing child up’n the yonder to the nearest house get
shack-shoppe, to the lovingly love of a long-faced realty-ore in her very self-person please,
Missy missy well-dressed suit suit find us a house yah yah ooh.

Ut?

Oh, missy all dressed up missy suitie suit suit find us our house yah yah eh. Good?

No, no. Ut say time it once more yet go go go on once more—but first; oh, thanky Peter-
San this one?

That later. Kay here; all dressed up missy suitie suitie suit suit find us our house plead oh
plead on you eh. Good?

No no no, no. Time it once more but differently yet go go go go once more—but please—
first, Oh thanky Peter-San missie. This one?

Said later. Now kay here, then; Missy missy suit suit find us oh find us some house any house plead you oh plead you oh well. Good?

Hak-oof! Bitte, but; now canny et oh oh oh thanky Peter-San ah missie this one?

Thit's it.

Oh! Thank God, lastie, yah last-thatch got found us some house any house this house the right house oh oh hey hey hey, oh missie?

Yup! Hot'n all yasso! Fartbummed over by yon my youndering mooseman of a collie-gue.

Oh thanky, butte; Peter-San house ah missie this the one?

Oh? Huh. Later no. But yes now, oh yah!

Hey, me too. Butt the ell.

Eh, all happy us also, but, Oh thanky Peter-San wise house ah missie got this the one bah?

Sorry, but so, uck, no. Much more innerportendant now d' she. Do us sweet. Can, ut?

Oh. K. Hey ess ess we mista' foundya yo' baby in this book in these old fashioned oakenwood shoelasts. Look!

Oh, thanky Peter-San gimme gotcha wise house ah ah house missie missy got this one be the one bah sis hey?

Heaven? Please, say that!

Ah!

Ooh, gotch' Miss realta' you might of just joyed us all down do dum joyously joyed us all the way down, et et, so tell us please tell us now please oh oh. Boom.

K. Oh. Look; number-ator she has. In the bassman 'neath the fender be that and apated togetherneat bump bumpidy firelogs. Like?

Oh, thanky Peter-San gotcha wise house ah house missie got this one the one bah hey?

Oh!

Great. Oh. K. Look; plus, a number-bat twoator she has also-gut twin Barbara-bar Bushies
auto-swat terminally Trantorian blaster-funk identically twinned-out odepools. Like?

Oh thanky!

Oh. K. Great. Look; and, in dat just's the lowbasketsful—just ten steps up see the foodball
hurlingcourt manned with multiple Stephensons randalled in perfesh-analy meant to last three or
fifty more or less slickly hardwired brunos. Like?

Oh, thanky Peter-San hey-o gimme gotcha wise hot house ah ah big house missie missy
gotcha got this one here be the one hessa' bah sis hey?

Oh, thanky one!

Great.

So.

< Nebba-mindaibo, but >

<It's a living>

Say. Nextclient.

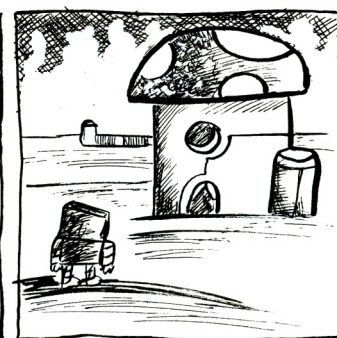
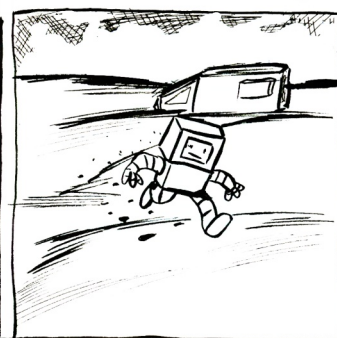
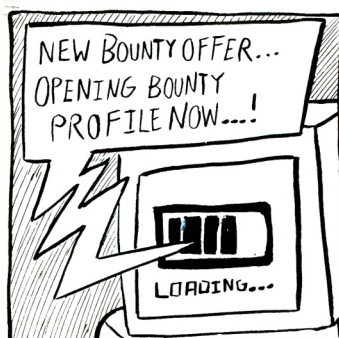
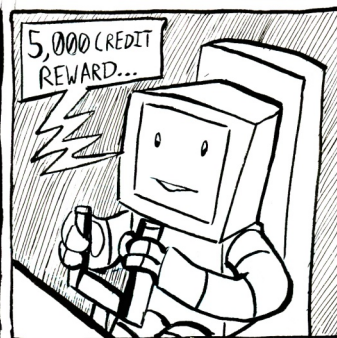
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There you go. Hippo!

Thank you Maybe.

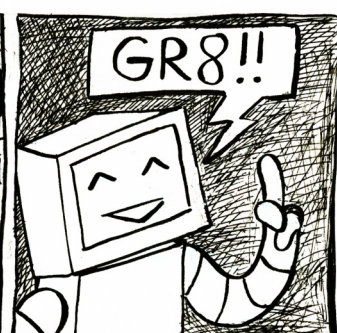
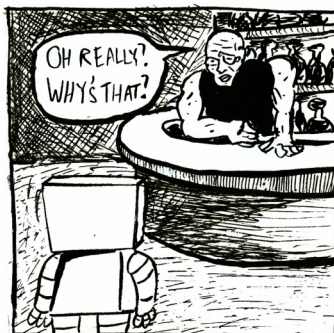
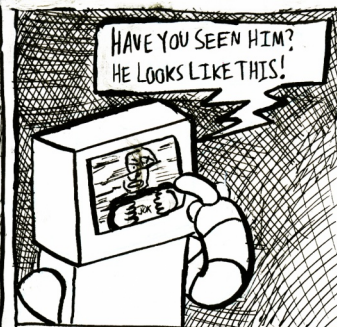
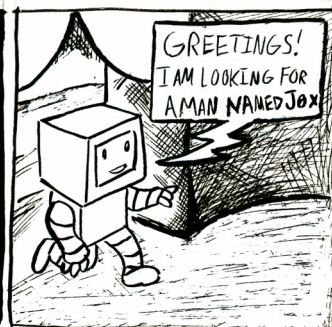
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BOUNTY BOT

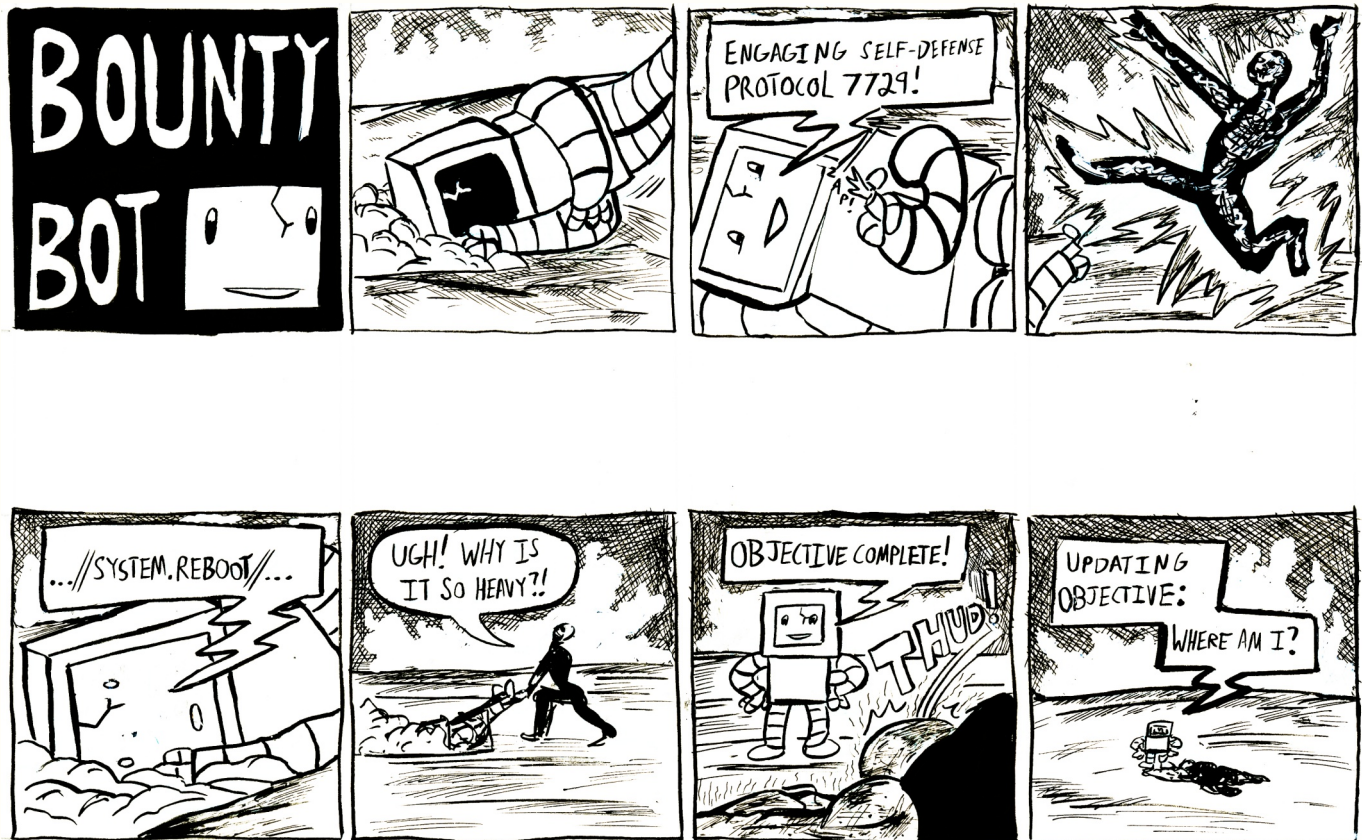


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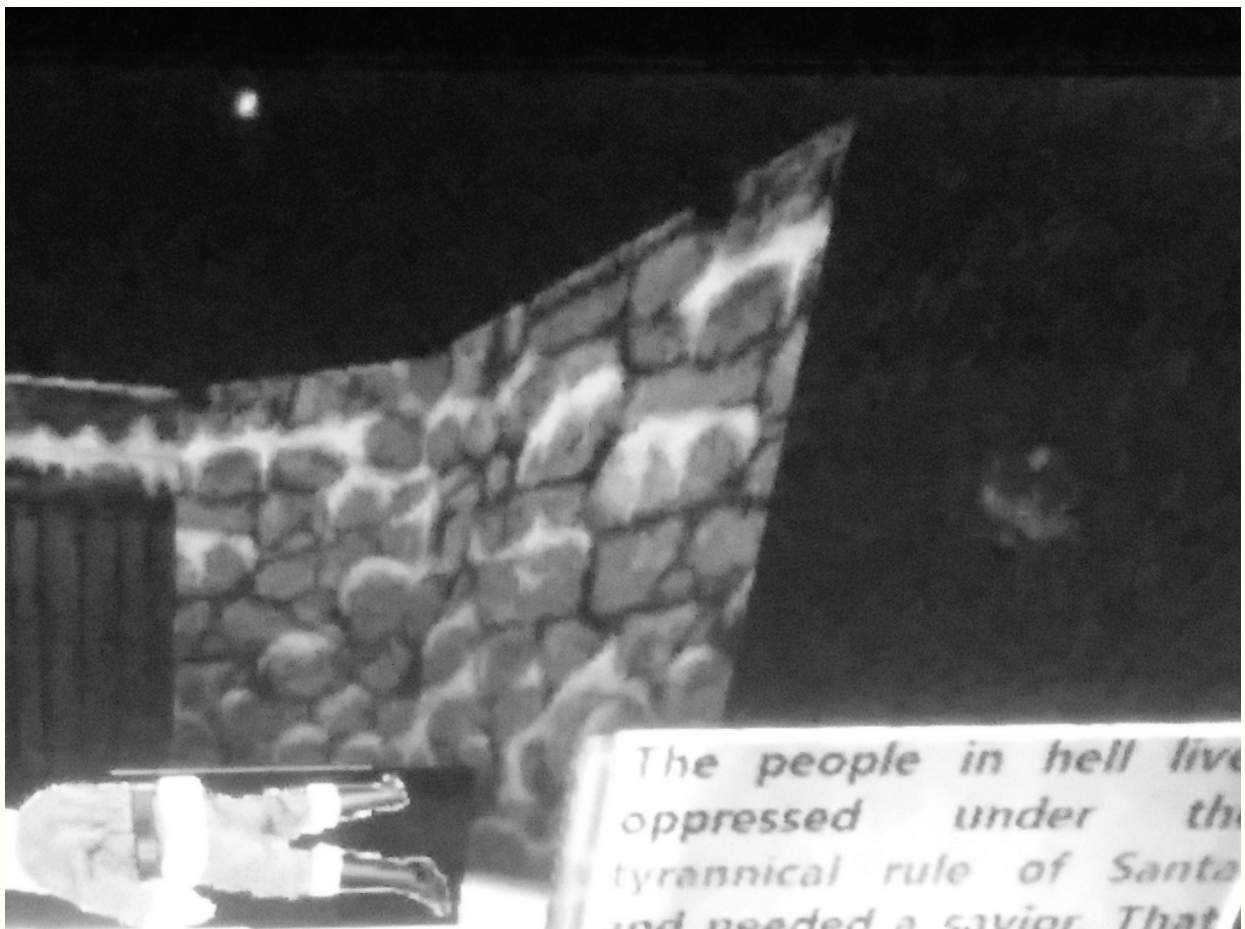
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Author: Brian Judge



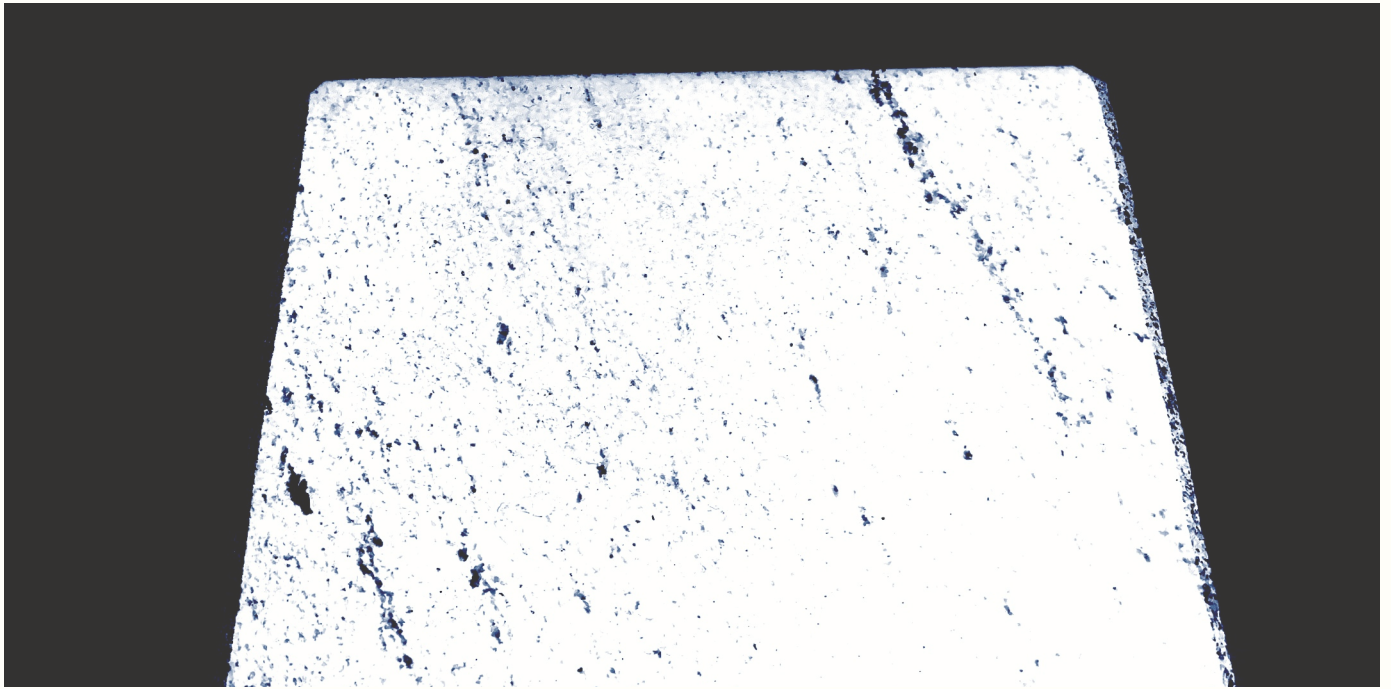
Author: Brian Judge



SEGA







Author: mtk

The Monolith

by 大雨

I knew I never should have entered this building. It was condemned for a reason, I suppose. And now, on a cold night in October, I've found out exactly why. Not ten minutes into my expedition, the very floor fell out beneath my feet, landing me in some kind of sinkhole-crawlspace. It smells of old wood and dirt, protruding spires of ruin from dark corners. I didn't really expect urban exploration to be that dangerous, looking back, but I should have expected more than a few missing pipes in such an old building. As if that weren't enough, I think I broke a rib from that fall. For now, the adrenaline keeps me

from feeling most of the pain, but I can't say how much longer it'll last. I reach to my belt for my flashlight, but it isn't there. That's right, I was holding it when I fell. It's a strange feeling, to touch nothing when you expect something to be there. My eyes dart around as I search fruitlessly for my lost flashlight, but it's too dark to see much of anything. I look upward, but I can barely see enough to tell that the protruding beams are too far apart to climb. I grab a piece of mostly intact wood, shuffling across the old cobbles while I move my stick like a blind man's cane.

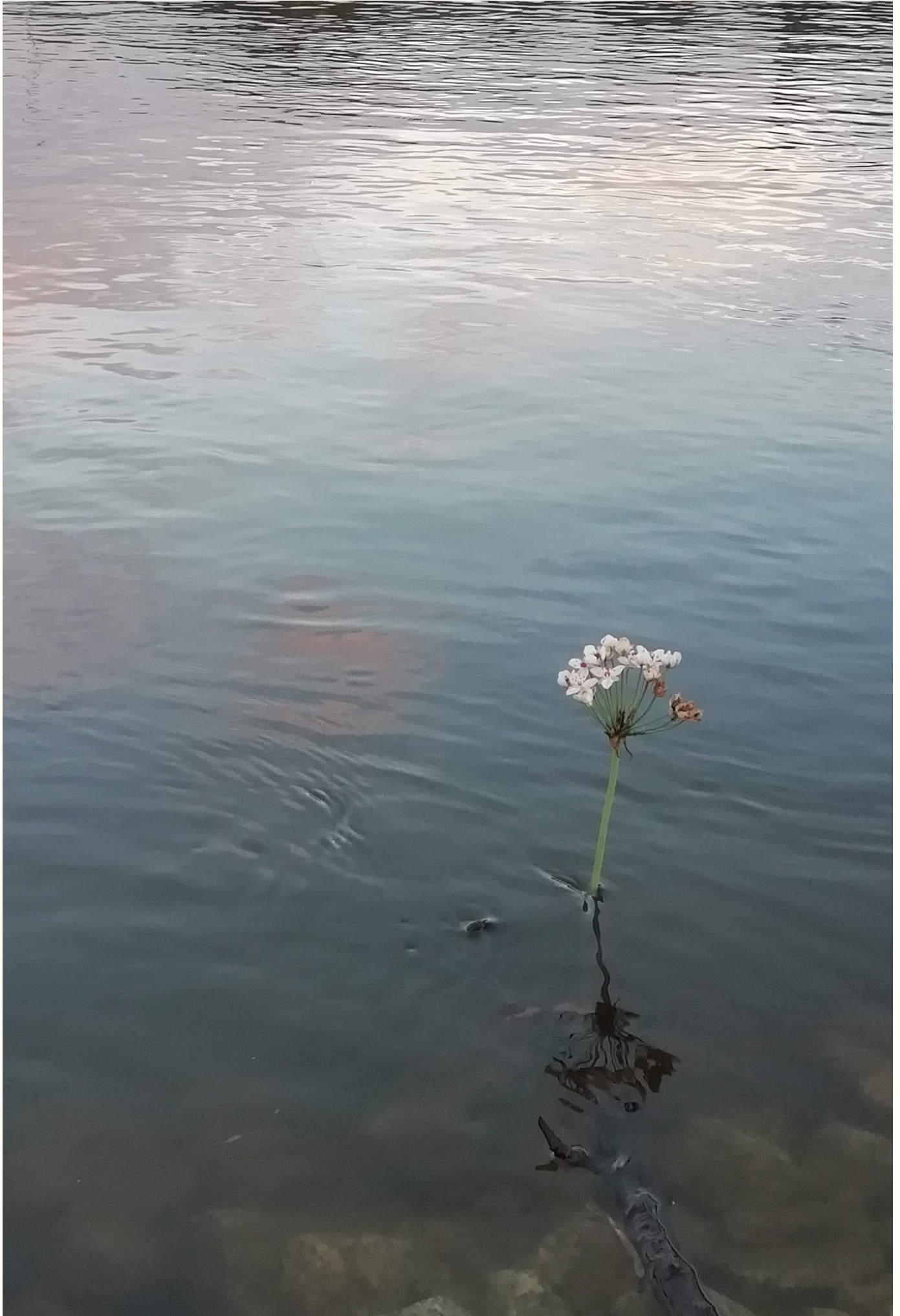
I soon come to the conclusion that not only am I trapped in this hole, but that I am stuck in an area only about the size of a medium sized house. The cold seeps into the cavernous space like water, chilling my bones and rendering my jacket near useless. I doubt anybody is going to come in here, or even hear me if I call out- it is near 2 A.M., after all- so I gather up some wooden scraps from what were once some kind of supporting structure to build a fire. I tear at my undershirt for several minutes until I manage to pull loose some material- who knew these things were so resilient? The absence of cloth is very obviously felt as my skin rubs unfavorably against the artificial material of my jacket. From there, I rub one piece of wood in a drilling motion against another piece. As soon as I have a coal, I gently blow on it until it has a slightly stronger glow. I drop the coal onto the piece of cloth, and then I plant it in the bottom area of the fire, on top of another piece of wood. With some more work and vigorous fanning, I manage to get a small blaze going. Only then am I able to dimly perceive my surroundings.

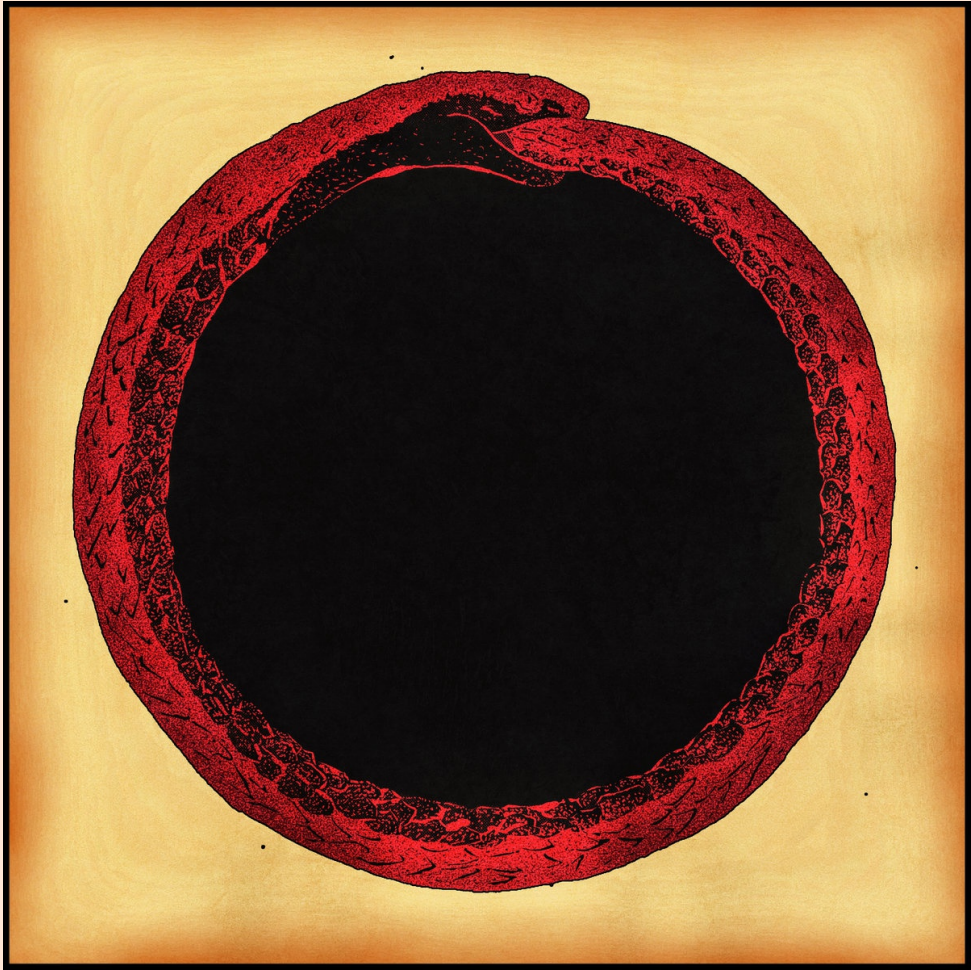
The cavern, now stained with an amber glow, is largely how I'd imagined it. Lots of broken wood and tile, cobblestone floor, and an amount of dirt permeating the space that leaves you inevitably thinking of the word "Ruins", which I suppose describes my current surroundings. I spot my flashlight hiding from me, tucked into a pile of rubble. It wasn't terribly well hidden, but in that darkness it was impossible to find much of anything. I pop the battery back into its place and holster the flashlight at my belt. As my eyes adjust to the light, It becomes more apparent that there is more material here than really necessary- maybe it was a storage room? But with this, maybe I can escape! I gather some old wooden beams, dragging the heavy material excitedly across the rough floor. I then pile them up against a wall. Tentatively, I climb the heaving mound and reach up to the first beam just in time for the pile to collapse below me. The already weak light is snuffed out in an instant as my dying fire is crushed by the old damp wood. I pull myself up on the solid beam and flick on my flashlight.

This time, it's a weak white light that traces my surroundings. I bite down on the hard plastic handle of my flashlight to free my right hand, and I reach upwards to the next beam. The old wood creaks as I pull myself out, finally flinging myself over the edge of the hole. I land on my back again, but I'm too exhausted to care.

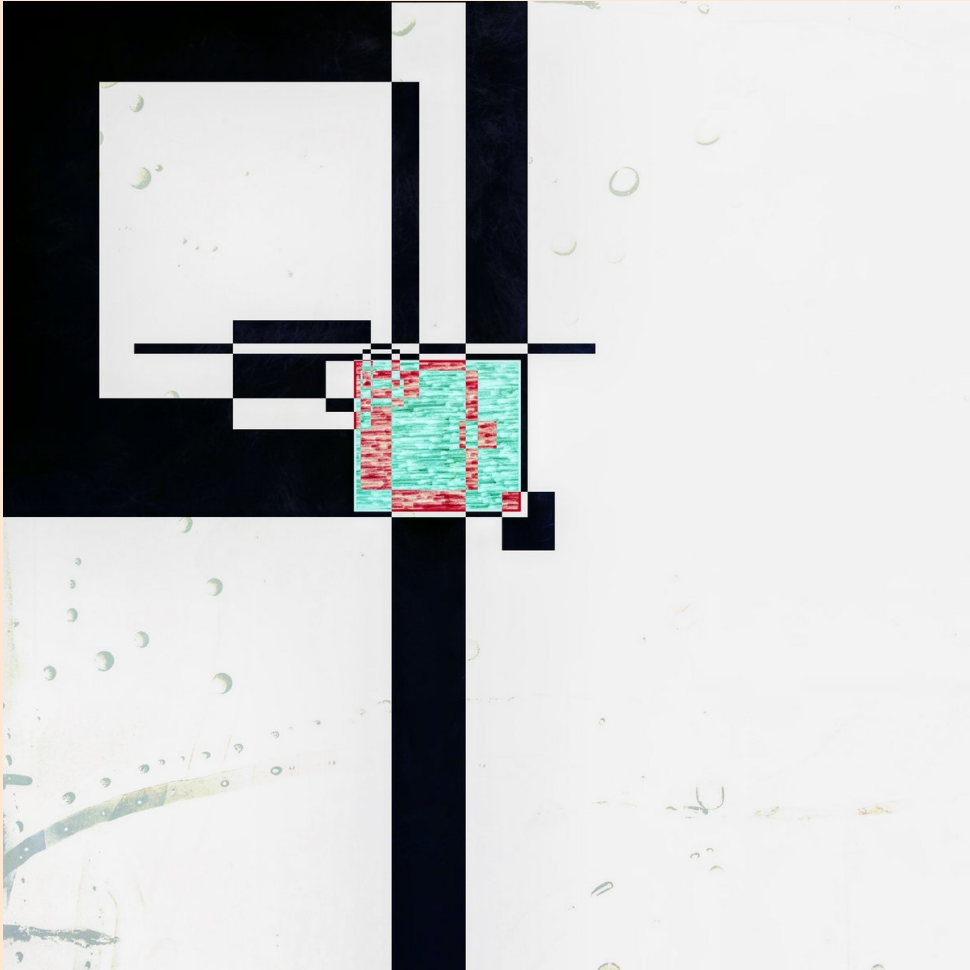
I look to my surroundings again, but something has changed. There's no way the church could have been this big, could it? I walk carefully about ten feet only to find another hole, about as large as the one I fell into. I shine my flashlight in, but the light is too dim to see the bottom. The light gets fainter and fainter until it becomes apparent that the flashlight battery is dead. I sit there in total darkness for some time- hours, maybe- until a bright light begins to wash over the ground. In front of me, there are thousands of these holes, and no walls at all- just more and more holes, like a beehive, stretching to the horizon. I turn around, and I'm nearly blinded. The sun is rising, but it's much larger than usual.

The terrain is identical to that behind me, save for a colossal stone object looming far away, yet casting a shadow that nearly touches me. Dark and massive, this thick, rounded spire is the largest object I've ever seen. I begin to work my way towards it, weaving between massive holes, but I seem no closer with each passing minute. Just how large -and how far away- is this damned thing? Hours pass on foot, and the sun blazes ferociously at its apex. Trudging on, the object seems to be only slightly closer than where I started. Dehydrated, starving and exhausted, I stop for a break. I peer into the nearest hole, but it seems bottomless, even at the brightest point in the day. In the blinding light, I see the **monolith** as it truly is- useless and terrifying. It would be unable to help me, even if it were willing. My journey is pointless. I look over into a hole- as unchanged and identical as always. The cobblestone flooring is slippery with my sweat, or perhaps I am. As I try to stand, I slip headfirst into the hole, falling shoulder-first into the bottomless pit.











"It's a saying—"

"That is correct"

"Now, is the meaning of that saying—"

"That is incorrect."

We, **the two of us**, used to sit there, on a several times repainted slab of crater-littered concrete that the teachers got angry about, us 'acting' like it is a bench instead of a table tennis... table—*God*, what *morons*—we sat there, twice a week after seventh periods, **killing time**.

"...Okay, right, but why?"

"Aster..."

"Yeah, that's me. You can see that I'm listening."

"When cats **die**..."

It stood right between the soccer field and the basketball court. Fairly awkward, with abundance of space around for almost another field. But nobody ever used it.

"..."

"..."

"Stop with the pause already."

Killing time before his mom picked him up from work, because his last good direct bus was gone now. Me **because I could**.

"They die."

"That's not what I'm saying. I know that. You know that, just, please, let's go through this."

"No. When you kill something, **it stays dead**."

The terracotta plastic red that softly imprints on your skin when

the teachers want you to crawl on it, *God*, what *awful sadists*.

"Yes, but that's not the saying."

"What is the saying?"

"Exactly! That!"

"I am thoroughly annoyed, please just get to the point."

"The point is for you to think about it."

Out of the two, I hated the elementary school much stronger.

The teacher treated us like garbage. Always snooping around anything we tried to do. Tiny ugly building falling apart. And they just had to start rebuilding it when we entered, *God*, just my luck. **And nothing ever happened there**.

"Okay, if that is what kills this interrogation, I will humor you.

'Cats have nine lives' is a saying that means 'cats', that is the animal, 'have nine', that is a number—"

"Why, though?"

The teachers from the next stage of our lives simply did not care. It irritated me. It was a way for them to then sigh at our mistakes and excuse themselves with us not being 'proactive'—*God*, what conceited *idiots*.

"—and **lives** is a— Uh..."

"Why would anybody say that?"

Every student was a **dolt**, though.

"Well, that is what I wanted to ask you, but now I wish nobody would ever ask anything."

"Why did people start saying it?"

"I do not know, Aster, because they thought cats have nine lives?"

"Nobody thinks that. Look, it's like the Santa thing."

"Woah."

"Nobody ever thought Santa was real."

"Woah, dude, like, that'sn't like true, man."

I used to get really angry at him for calling me 'dude', but then I noticed he does that to everyone and not really anyone, just himself. It still did not excuse his obnoxious mannerisms, but it was my fault for enabling it. I despised consequences, but never did anything.

"Stop making fun of me. You talk weird, and you're being an asshole."

"What?"

"If you just gave it a thought, this would be over already."

"Okay, sure! It means nothing! People just say it because they heard it repeated, so they must also repeat, no matter how stupid it is. How about that?"

"Well... yeah, but it isn't that stupid."

"How?!"

When the nerve-wrecking bell rang extra long for the extra long break the entire fenced outside got swarmed with havoc-wreaking brats unleashed and stuck-up teachers yelling at us if anyone tried anything. It was worse than

winter packed halls I treated like the plague they were. I could swear you could jump out the window and drown there.

"Gee, calm down, man. It's just..."

"What?!"

"I've been thinking about it is all. How... Nobody really means that they have nine lives, but, it's like... You know cats, right?"

"Yes, Aster. I know what cats are."

"They are so... tough, you know."

"Okay, maybe we are talking about different 'cats'."

"No, like, they jump on trees like it's nothing, sleep there all cool, and then just jump all the way down and walk on."

"People call firemen to save their cats."

"No, that's not it. You know, like... when they climb from a flat to another, not caring—they don't have to. They can fall and not break a bone, just dart away, from like the third story."

It is not like I got along with him in particular, nor that I did not get along with everyone else.

"Cats break bones, they just fail to care."

It is just that he was there and I could.

"Yeah, but that's not it. They are..."

"Agile? Flexible? Resilient?"

For seemingly no reason, as the clouds got darker and the sun thinner, the atmosphere denser and I **restless**, I wanted to get away.

"Yeah! That! That? Like, you get it, right?"

"That doesn't mean they can survive death."

"That's not what that saying means, though! It means they can fall from that big height and jump just as high, and that's cats. They are tiny, but can do bigger shit than us. You know."

"..."

"You know?"

"Yes, and it is late now, **good bye**."

"Wait! No, I mean... You get it now, right? It's not that they mean the fairy tale bullshit, it's how fairy tale the cats are. They can survive that."

You could see it in the distance. Rain stealing definition from other clouds afar. I hoped it would come here.

"Aster, when cats die, **they die**. You will not *die* when you jump from the third story, you will *break a leg*."

"But cats are tiny, dude!"

"When you jump off a sixth story, you will break both legs."

"They are tinier! You can't fill a house with two cats."

"Jump off the twelfth story."

The humidity in the air clashed with the heat-beaten grass below

my feet. It had a **crunch** to it.

"Bye!"

The gate was all the way on the other side, along the fence away from our past school building. As I walked closer, **I first noticed it**. It was a cold day, suddenly. The fences' paint blended with the shadow-filled rustling trees, and I got a little sick. I could still **feel him** and hear **him** a little, behind me, but I was not as conscious of **it**.

I finally got to the beaten-up pathway. Once I got out, I turned **sharp right** and along the pond. The next day, on that table, there laid a **cat**.

Dirtied and completely gutted.

Day Two

It's so **nice**.

Yesterday was so bleh. It rained all through the night and now everything's wet. What a cool morning.

It's hot again. Just as a summer should be. Sparrows chirp in the singing trees, cicadas in the bushes and lit-up sunny fields, girls switch to shorts and mini-skirts and dresses.

I'm passing them all, barley, sunflower, rapeseed. I could watch them run in front of my eyes forever. It's like they are changing, but we are just that fast. Every day, I get the feeling like I'm still sleeping. Maybe I really do fall asleep here. Sometimes I wonder if like I'm just dreaming the whole day through. It feels like everything's how I want it. Like everything's my. **Like I can do anything.** Today feels really great.

I get reminded of the girls I hear every time I take the later bus. Always whining about the bus stop being too far away from school. It's the shortest twenty minutes and it's a damn shame. I miss the hour of walking home when I lived here. Felt like a moment. It's like I closed my eyes and saw it, like the images of the path between the school and lake, the trees hugging you and scratching you, the gray graffitied wall with dicks we drew, the thick river I'd stare into, both when it was green with trees surrounding it and brown when it rained, the forest I'd use to make the walk longer, or the other paved hill, my sweat when getting to the top, and our neighborhood, first the pink, then beige and yellow on the other side, two pastel reds (I

wonder if they planned for it), and finally our Prussian blue. All just a second and nothing but them. Sometimes I still remember them. I hope I'll remember in high school. It's too soon. **I'm so excited.**

The pavement's warning pinkish **red** matches this one's pretty lady's dress. She's tanned and has black hair down below her shoulder blades, so she looks really, like, how she should. You could eat the air, live off of it. This delicious grassy wetness is to live for, really. It's days like these I'm glad to be going to this school, still. Nothing can beat Summer after finals. Not to diss Winter, the frozen lake and white decorations on the fence and court and our table...

Our table...

My bus comes too early (**the later bus would be risky**) so I must be the first to see it today. Well, there is a killed cat on our table. Killed, gutted, totally brutally **murdered**. From neck—actually the very bottom of its jaw—it's been split right open, through its **rib-cage**, its **intestine**, down to its **bladder** and **womb** and the **entrance**.

Not only that, there's almost very clearly a **cut** or a **bruise** or a **broken bone** and **dint** on any given part of it. It's mostly **red**. Its skull has been **smashed**. Its mouth has been stuffed with its own **cut-off tail**. Looking from the other side, its **spine** was open to the whole wide world too.

The **guts** are almost half-and-half left alone and cut up, but definitely all outside the body. If not for a rib making it into a **tent**, it'd look like a popped **balloon**. There's the **spleen** in purple dices, there's the **heart** in two, one half like a **bowl** for the **spleens**, but they're spilled, the **second half** lying there like it's in the table, there's the **small intestine** in a circle around everything, now looking like an **uncooked sausage**, but a bit pinker, and there's the **big bowels** torn apart and thrown all over, mostly on the cat, there's the almost white **bladder** that got cut through, and there's the **womb**, cut out but okay, there's the **lungs**, too, clearly torn out of the ribs **by hand**, with a lotta strength. I say **lungs**, but the only thing that hints on the **red-black-blue** mush being **lungs** anymore is that they have partially been stuck into the broken ribs, **which most people probably wouldn't think about**.

It must look **weird**, but of all the things that weren't broken are its **legs**. All but the back left one, which is a complete **oatmeal**. It was laid down on its right side and the legs are all pointing to **whoever** could be looking at it, pretty much like it is **sleeping**. The broken one, though, is turned the other way, over its body.

Below the layers of **blood** and dirt and occasional smear of green grass, I can see patches of fur. Kinda thick but it wasn't fluffy before the **killing**. Nice cheap coat of brownish grayish black, with a bit of its beige stripes still visible in places. **It used to be an incredibly soft kitty**, but now that it's soaked, it kinda just seems sad. **It's pretty in its own right**. You can still tell that around its left eye (**which is now nowhere to be found**) there used to be a spot of that almost khaki decoration. **It's cool**. The right side, **nobody could tell anymore**.

You can still almost see the **blood trail** leading from our gate, across the grass and running track, **needlessly** through the basketball court right up here. You can see the dirt on its side where it was **dragged**.

The most visible that the **blood** is is on our side of the table, basically all across it. The corners give off the feeling that it was all **sprayed** from the center, where the cat was left, but at that fuller middle, there's lotta different marks, splatters, fur prints, blobs, gut smears, and now that I look closer, there even could be some half **finger prints** and few pressed up **knuckles**. **That's really exciting**. It had so much **blood** in it.

All and all, this must give off the feeling that it's very... **made to be seen**. Yeah. Man, **it's really something to see**. Really, **incredible**. **Poor little thing**. By the lunch break, the janitor cleaned it up, it seems.

"Do you want to sit there?"

"Uh... No."

"It is gone already."

"Yeah, but no."

"Good. Neither do I."

Looking around, there's only one really good place away from people, and that's this little space behind our school's unused stage, between it and the fence. It's a really cool place, this school. It's just so... historical.

You've got the old newly rebuilt elementary school that's the cutest building in town and then this other building for middle schoolers that is like a modern block, but it's so old now. I heard they're gonna fix it up, too. There's just always something new to see here. There's just enough space for me to lie down facing the lake. Oh, man, and **what a view**. It's so nice and relaxing.

Lotta balls end up there, but it's forbidden to get close or even leave the school grounds. I heard a kid **drowned** there the year before we entered. **Poor kid**. Instead, the school has bunch of balls and keep buying more. Though we do go around it as shortcuts when leaving school. Nobody cares.

"How are you today?"

"Why're you asking?"

And more importantly, why are you still standing?

"You know."

"I don't, and that's my line, you can't steal it from me."

"There is a **ripped open cat** in our usual spot—" and now you're walking around "—the day after we talked about **dead cats—mayhaps!** Aster, you could have some thoughts about it."

Man, I **hate** my name. It's a stupid weird name, so everybody just calls me by my family name. Everyone but **Dan**.

"It wasn't me."

When I've gotta use a name, I at least choose something less stupid.

"I did not think it was."

"Was it you?"

And what are you looking at? **Turn to people** when you talk with them.

"**No**, Aster, it was not me. **Was it you, Aster?**"

Oh no, please, **turn back**.

"I said no!" And it's a girl's name, but nobody knows. "Just asking you isn't accusing you."

"Aster."

I think **Dan might know**.

"Yes, you really got my name down."

"**Have you killed the cat, Aster?**"

"**No!** I haven't..."

Is Dan really that bothered by it? I mean, it was **really something**. Now I kinda regret I just left it there. But it's not like I could have cleaned it up before school.

"But you gotta admit, it's **really something** to see."

"Jesus Christ, Aster, did you kill the cat?"

"What? It is! It doesn't exactly happen every day, right?"

"Do you get off to road-kill when you see one?"

"Hey, I didn't jerk off to the cat or anything."

"I was not even thinking about masturbation! What is wrong with you?"

"Nothing! I didn't kill it!" I wonder what 'Aster' means. "And what do you mean that you weren't thinking about it?"

Mom said it was something lame like 'you are our star', but dad didn't know.

"What, the masturbation? Well, Aster, the thing is, nobody in their right mind would associate a **brutalized cat** immediately with masturbation."

"You said get off!"

I feel **better** now that Dan's looking at me.

"That does not mean ejaculating on dead animal's carcass!"

"I didn't cum on it!"

"Oh, what a relief..."

Will you keep looking away from me?

"No, but really, what did you mean by 'get off'?"

"Most of the time when someone says 'get off to', they just mean 'generally appreciate'. Doing something 'for kicks'. **Just to do it**, to see what it is like and enjoy it."

"Huh. I never really thought about it like that."

"You never thought about enjoying something without masturbating?" Wait, 'Aster' shorter is 'Ass', shit.

“Wait, really?”

“No, of course I did! I don’t masturbate to everything! It’s just, like... I don’t know. I gotta think about it.”

The silence that the water makes is **so nice** I’m actually glad for this awkward silence. I guess Dan must like it, too. Maybe all the walking and looking away isn’t it, maybe it’s just how cool this place is. Dan likes to hang out with me, so enjoying these moments is a must, right? I sit up straighter so I can actually see the water.

“**Who do you think did it?**”

“I do not know, Aster, **Curiosity?**”

“...Huh.”

“No, Aster, curiosity does not kill cats, dogs do.”

“...Oh, shit, man, you got it before me!”

“Oh, God, no. How is curiosity a dog. Wait, do not–”

“It’s not just a dog!”

“A rhetorical question, Aster”

“Wow, you really do know the big words.”

“What grade are you in again, Aster?”

“Same as you.”

“Oh, God.”

“Wait, no, it couldn’t be a dog.”

“But the concept of **curiosity**, Aster, we should examine that one closely. I have heard someone saw the creep with **a knife** yesterday.”

“It definitely had to be a blade.”

“I must be your favorite plaything to mock.”

“What? No, I meant that a dog couldn’t slice it open like that. And I don’t think it was someone named ‘Curiosity’.”

“But you are going to say it was **curiosity** anyway.”

“No! ...But, it’s like, that’s what the saying means.”

“Well this time you blew my mind right open. To such an extent that I lack enough of it to figure out how this particular cat’s **curiosity** made it experiment with autopsy.”

“Not the cat’s curiosity... Oh, shit.”

“What? No, wait, I miss the ignorance already–”

“The cat got killed because it was curious!”

“Okay, glad this is over.”

And Dan finally sits down.

Weirdly not next to me, but opposite to me, but still not facing me. I’ve been feeling this **thing** lately. It’s mostly around **Dan**, but some other people and even **alone**. It was really awful yesterday. I should ask.

“I thought the saying meant someone else curious killed it,” I say.

It’s kinda a **weird** feeling. Maybe it’s just the cat.

I want to be here **forever**.

Everywhere here. It's a shame I stay at dad's only on weekends.

"How do you think they did it?"

"I do not know, Aster, very hard...-ly, with my own gigantic scissors."

"Shit, you do have big-ass scissors."

"What?!"

Now you look like you could kill a cat.

"Do you seriously want to say I brutalized the cat?"

"You did kill Timmy—"

I jump up at almost the same time as Dan without thinking.

"What are you trying to say to me?!!"

"Relax, dude, please."

"Then stop accusing me of being a horrible maniac!"

"I didn't, I swear I didn't, please. I'll stop, I swear."

I drop back on my butt, but Dan starts walking to the corner again.

"Look, it's just weird, okay? I don't know what to think about it. If you don't want to talk about it—"

"Why would anyone do it?"

"...Yeah."

"No, that was not rhetorical. Why, actually, would anyone do it?"

"Oh, that's what I meant. Curiosity. You already said it."

"Aster."

"It's not that insane."

"It was our table."

"It's not like it belongs to us."

"And we were talking about dying cats."

"Not dying. And that wouldn't be about killing cats. Right? ...Why would anyone bully us for that?"

"Jealousy?"

"Of the great conversation we had?"

"No and no."

"Why then?"

"Jealousy of the density of your brain."

"...Is that good?"

"You tell me."

I do this too often sometimes. Being like I don't get it. Doing these pauses. They really do themselves. It just feels right. Like I should. Like, it's more fun to do it.

"Wait, you did see the cat, right?"

"Yes, unfortunately. You don't think it was a message?"

"I didn't think of it like that, no."

"Right after the cat discussion."

"That was just a coincidence, though."

"That is some coincidence, Aster."

"But really. Look, who could even hear us? It's so open everywhere. There's no one anywhere, ever, and it's too far to hear us."

"Well, it was you, then."

...

"I did not do it."

"I didn't do it!"

"Then you better brainstorm why anyone would do it."

"I said it, **curiosity**. You already said it. **Someone just wanted to.**"

"And why our table?"

"I said, **someone just wanted to.**"

Now that it feels so **weird**, I just noticed Dan hasn't been that, like, active. I guess not even in classes. It's not like we don't do anything here and it's not like Dan has always started the talking. It's just, it wasn't me all the time. I guess that's something I should be thankful to the cat for.

"**Why would you do it?**"

"What?"

"Since you seem unable to think of why would someone do it, ask yourself. **What would you want to say with it?**"

"I guess, like... **To show how tough cats are.**"

"You failed."

"I don't think so. It looked plenty tough."

"Not much to me."

"Why would you do it?"

"I do not know, **I am not a murderer.**"

"I mean like what if, come on."

"You must **love** tormenting others. First Timmy postmortem, then the other cat premortem and physically, now me psychologically."

"Hey, I thought we were supposed to take it seriously now."

"I never agreed to that."

"'Kay, you don't need to."

Dan always looks all thinking. Right? Maybe today especially. Never considered it. The long thin fingers, tiny nails, **the lips**. Never considered—

"**To make you think.**"

"...About what?"

"About how stupid it was to make me think about cats having nine lives."

I get distracted by clouds. It's like watching time forever at once. When you see two layers, when there's one big slowly falling apart and another above it going fast, **you forget**. It's like that all the time. That's why it makes me **sick** to watch clear blue sky. I just hang there. I'm in there, here. And we all just flow.

Dan got up.

"Wait, where you going?"

"Home, **dolt**. See you tomorrow."

"Oh, okay. Bye."

Man, **damn you**, Dan. It's not even that late, it's so bright. Is it? Whoops. I guess that's it for the day.

Day Three

He approached me.

Just need to take my mind off things.

Asked if I wanted to 'hang out'.

Right when I wanted to suggest it.

"Okay, do you want go somewhere?"

It's so gloomy again.

"Yeah, actually. Somewhere away from school, until evening."

Looking back on that day now makes today look really awful. I could feel it back then, at that moment. Again, exactly like it was two days before that. It made me sick and excited.

"What, do you want tourist tips from me?"

"You said you don't come home until evening, right? You gotta know a good hideout."

The only option in this dung of a town would be any one of the forests that surrounds it.

Unfortunately, that means more people thinking the same, so I can't go with that.

"Hideout? Am I some misfit hiding from the law of my father?"

Father lives in an apartment in the middle of the town. A narrow three-story six-flat squeezed between a bike shop and a closed cheap clothes shop. It is straight in front of an intersection.

The road to it narrow, winding, and steep, yet the place has unclear signs and even muddier view on where to turn and where people park. Hearing cars squeak or crash cannot faze me anymore. His daddy lived back up the road, in the suburbia hellhole he built and has to rent to keep.

Definitely don't want to go near any of those.

"Whatever, like, what about the lakes? Let's just go."

"No, lakes will not do," Dan hurries immediately.

"Why?"

"People."

Right.

If it's gonna rain...

I guess the trees have no choice but to be our umbrellas.

There are places, like where the fields start, that have the game-keep towers that (I think) nobody uses (but the homeless). Here's hoping the stench won't be off-putting (to anyone).

"Why do you want to go somewhere with me?"

You could actually bite into the air sometime. It was the densest atmosphere I have ever felt, though I felt no danger (or salvation) of rain, and that time it felt right. I didn't want it to.

"It's just mom, I don't wanna talk about it."

God, what ungrateful bastard.

"What, are you eloping?"

“What?”

“Running away.”

From what?

“No. I said **I don't want to talk about it**, it's nothing. **Let's just go.**”

“Great, so where are we going exactly?”

“I dunno, wanna visit the castle park?”

No.

And Dan says it.

“'Kay, any suggestions then? What about the pits? I **love** it there.”

The pits, as nobody calls it, is this thing down South that is like a microcosm of everything wrong about this town, in that it is smaller, emptier, more run-down, and packed full of bored obnoxious kids.

“Sure, let's walk for over an hour just so mommy don't find you.”

“**I'm not trying to get lost!** I just want to go somewhere!”

What an **idiot**, and too old to be an idiot.

I **hate** this and that **it** came to this, but I get now that I've got nobody to rely on. I don't care how bad and stupid I am for this, and I don't think it matters. I just need **a moment**. And the moment can't be this.

“**What about the ruins,**” she tells me out of nowhere.

“The ruins?”

“The wall and a half of a castle on the edge of town.”

“Oh, you mean the Ruins.”

“Yes, right.”

Right below ‘The Ruins’ is this patch of spiraling sharp branches that you can crouch and crawl through in places. It's a cool place. **It is perfect.**

“Isn't that the town over?”

“It is much closer... There is a really cool place there. **You will love it.**”

We set out, and soon enough I **notice it**.

I should have noticed **that we haven't spoken the whole day**, but it seems pretty usual. Now **it** shouldn't, I think.

“Won't your dad mind?”

Hah.

“No, he has no time to care.”

I'm feeling **something** again. The same as two days ago, seeing **Danika** walk away. I can't calm **it** down, now that **she's** right here.

Why did I do **this**? Do I really want to see where **this** goes?

Maybe **it** will be nothing. Just nothing again. Nobody will ever know or remember, **but us two**.

“Do you know Schrodinger's cat?”

I was going to be ‘**Daniel**’. I would **hate** that name, just as I do now. Recently I have learned it means ‘**God is our judge**’. That **angered** me. If I brought that up, what would **he** think?

“I don't believe we met before, no.”

We continued like **that** forever and I forgot to be conscious of **it**. I forgot to remember **it**, though I got so excited to be there, to be **there** again. The silence feels like **it** should be there. Or rather like there's no place for anything else. **It** was suffocating.

There's nobody around at all. Unusual. We continued anyway. I could forever remember **that**. **That feeling**. The odd encompassing brand new **sensation** I **hated** and **wanted more of**, but that exact time felt uncomfortable by, and then feared the other day. I did not know what **it** was and why **it** was. What is it now? For seemingly no reason, as the clouds got blacker and the sun thinner, the atmosphere denser and I **restless**, I wanted to get away. I could feel **it** in him. For quite a bit longer before even then, but then I really noticed **it**, in me also. And **it** seems more and more like **she's** the same. I could have guessed **it** was 'resentment'. As we walked closer, I noticed **it**. More and more. And here **it** is. The end of the forest. **It's** about ten minutes away from **it** happening, **again**. I can barely **stop my breath**. The jittery hands in our pockets. **They could feel it, too**.

Our entire bodies waiting, not knowing what's going to happen to either of them. **What one would do to the other**. That was the **suffocation** that **I** would soon **force to end**.

Timmy

In a small patch of woods, big enough for its floor to be covered and bordered by detritus, on a windless day, **dragging footsteps** could be heard, crunching on the nutritious residue. Further away, following those feet, a **small cat** was **limping** along.

|BFZ|



A stylized illustration of a red, flame-like character with a long, pointed nose and a small body, set against a background of colorful, multi-colored dots. The character has a simple, rounded body and a long, pointed nose that ends in a small flame. The background is a dense field of small, multi-colored dots in various colors including red, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The entire illustration is framed by a thick red border.



remember

bits to terabytes, signal remains - atoms to cells, bits to terabytes,

shell extraction project



RELEASE FROM SELF

bits to terabytes, signal remains - atoms to cells, bits to terabytes, signal remains - atoms to cells,

signal remains - atoms to cells, bits to terabytes, signal remains - atoms to cells, bits to terabytes,

Author: skrong

Author: skrong

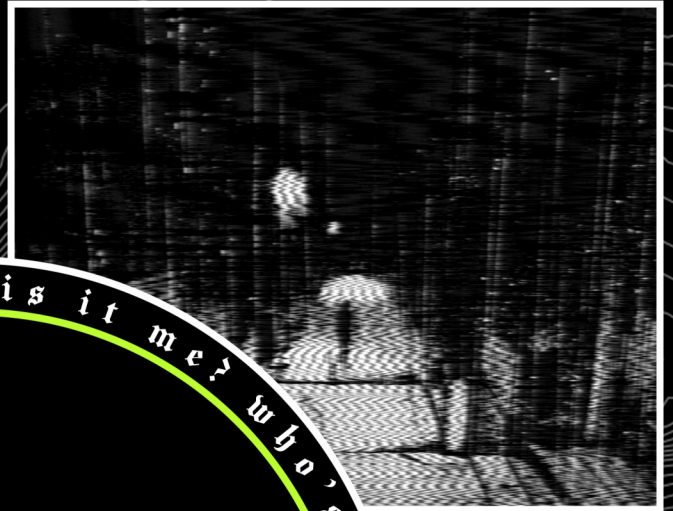
live from the gutter  sundays at midnight

be a stranger

heard

seen

felt

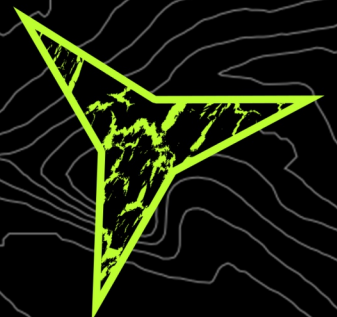


lost

found



balance of
knowledge
and action



ever feel like you want to step into a picture
and never leave?



ever feel like you want to step into a picture
and never leave?





Author: Dunkelshireken

SEE YOU SPACE COWBOY...